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# THE PLEDGE:

OR,



THE FIRST STEP TO FORTUNE.

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A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.

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# P R E F A C E.

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WHEN the justly celebrated "BOTTLE" of George Cruikshank first made its appearance, the author of the following pages conceived, that if a tale were written embodying the moral lesson conveyed by the artist, he would be aiding in the great and good cause which had prompted the designer of these well known plates. That he has succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, he has the satisfaction of knowing from the best authority, and as the work has met with a circulation unprecedented even in the cheap literature of the day, there is every reason to believe that the lesson inculcated has not been taught in vain. The writer, then, has the high gratification of feeling that his labours have tended to check an evil that has brought millions of his fellow creatures to ruin.

As the "BOTTLE" was intended to show the horrors consequent upon intemperance, so was its sequel the "PLEDGE" written to teach the erring that a life of sobriety and honour fails not to meet with its just reward. The last named work, like its predecessor, has found a circulation exceeding even the most sanguine hopes of its writer; and thus thousands of persons have been brought to reflect seriously upon the monster vice that has tended to so great an extent to demoralize the age. Thus encouraged in his labours to be useful to his fellow men, the publisher has made arrangements to produce a series of works, having for their object the bettering the condition of all classes by showing the hideousness of vice in contrast with the happiness that attends the upright man.

*London, February, 1848.*

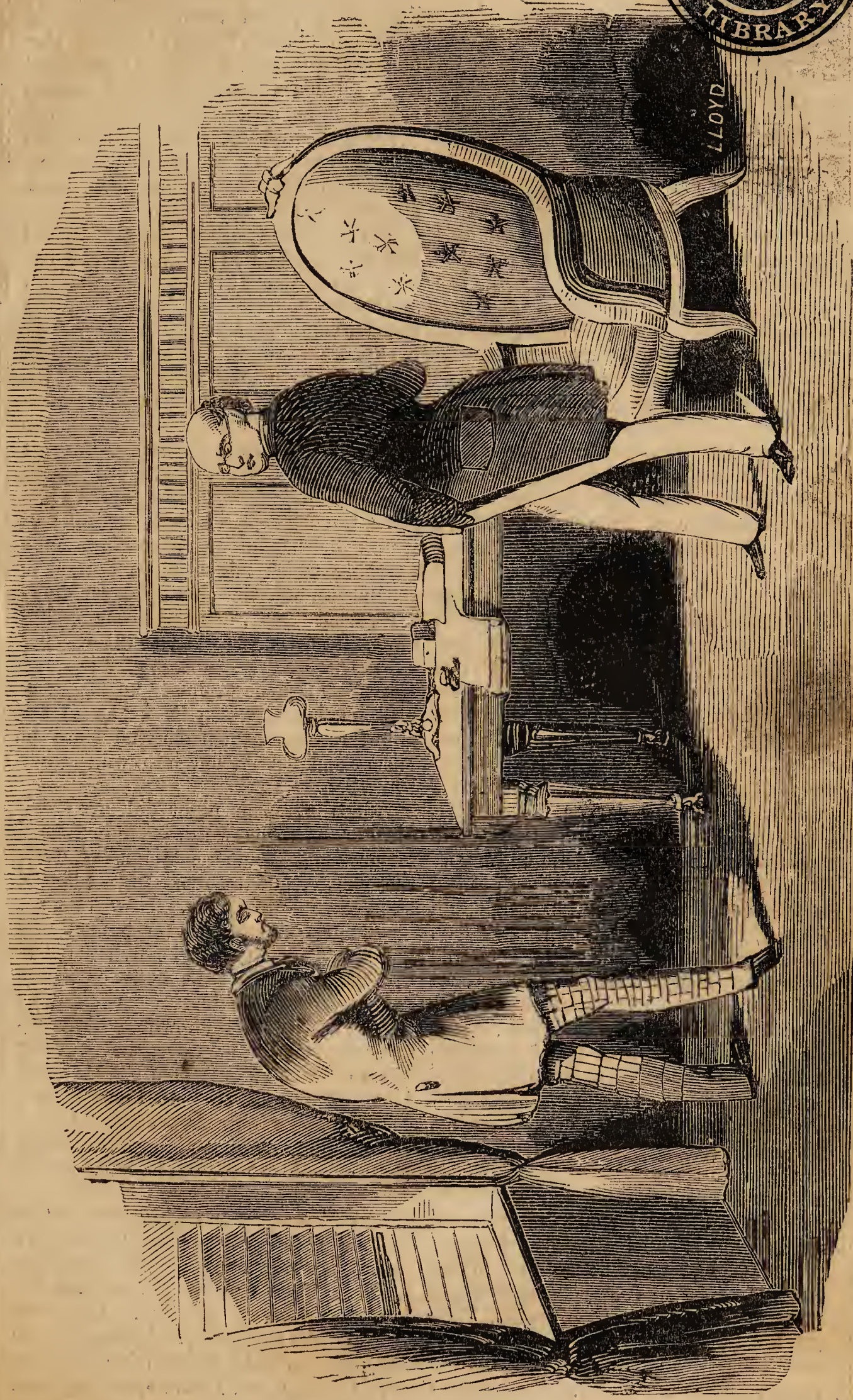




# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.



LLOYD





## CHAPTER I.

MARLOW TAKES THE PLEDGE, OBTAINS THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS FORMER MASTER, AND IS RECEIVED BACK INTO HIS EMPLOY.

WHEN once a man has forfeited the esteem and confidence of the world it is long—very long before he can regain his lost position. People still doubt him—think he is only penitent because he has been made to suffer for his follies, and believe in their own minds that if he had the same opportunity given him, he would run a similar round of dissipation to that which had led to his ruin. Such was the case with Frederick Marlow, who, though perfectly sincere in his determination to become sober and industrious, found it impossible to obtain employment from those who had been obliged to discharge him on account of his intemperate habits. It is true he had never forfeited his character for honesty, but those he applied to argued within themselves that drunkenness leads to all other vices, and he was therefore, in spite of his reformed habits, doomed to pass month after month in a state of the most abject poverty. As far as he was himself concerned he could have endured all this without a murmur as the just punishment of his own misdeeds; but unfortunately there was a wife and family to suffer with him and often did his heart bleed when he saw the resignation with which they passed day after day, with barely sufficient food to keep life and soul together. He could sometimes weep for them in secret, but alas! tears were unavailing when there was not one being in the world who would put forth a hand to rescue them from the hard pressure of want.

Mary Marlow, the patient, enduring, wife, was not one of those who sink under misfortune. She was possessed of a heart and soul superior to most people, and anxious only for her husband and children she complained not of her own privations lest she should add to the misery which was already almost too great for endurance. She was still hopeful for the future, and in spite of the gloom that shrouded their present prospects, looked forward with a firm re-

liance to a period when fortune would once more smile upon them. Her husband was now thoroughly reformed from all his former idle and vicious habits; in his own mind he had resolved never again to drink anything that was intoxicating; yet for all that he remained without employment, because people were distrustful of his resolution.

His sharp-witted wife readily perceived the cause, and most earnestly did she urge him to join a Temperance Society, and take the pledge. That step, she argued, would give people confidence in his future conduct, though they would not trust him whilst they had merely his own bare word to depend upon. It is strange that Marlow should have neglected this advice so long. Perhaps he was afraid of being laughed at by those who had formerly heard him speak of such societies with derision; or it may be that he was averse to doing anything which might argue a want of reliance on himself. Be the cause, however, what it may, he delayed taking her advice from time to time, and it was not till they were driven to the very verge of starvation that he promised no longer to postpone an act which he began to see might rescue them from the state of misery and destitution into which they had fallen.

And that same night did Frederick Marlow keep his word. He became a member of a Temperance Society, took the pledge, and resolved to become a good example to others. Now this act may appear unnecessary for a man who had already conquered the evil habit of drinking. In his case, however, it was not so, for something was required by way of surety that he would never relapse into his former ways, and nothing could he have done so effectually to serve that purpose as to bind himself by a solemn pledge to drink no more intoxicating liquors. That night he returned home a happier man than he had been for a long time previously.

"Well Mary," he said, on presenting himself before her; "at length I've taken your advice and joined the gallant band that are making war against the greatest enemy of mankind. I am now thoroughly a teetotaler, and from this time I hope to date the return of those happy days that you and I have spent together.



Plenty will again enter our house, and instead of seeing my wife and children starving and in rags, I shall behold them with smiling faces, and rejoicing in the happy change that has taken place."

"And now," she said, "you will be able to ask for employment with some confidence."

"Aye that I shall," exclaimed her husband. "To-morrow, I'll go and see Mr. Bellamy, my old master; he has always spoken kindly to me, and when he hears what I've done, there's no doubt he will give me hopes of being taken again into his house."

"But will he do so at once?" asked Mary.

"I think it very likely he will, for he has lately discharged one of his men, and as the vacancy has not yet been filled up, I mean to ask him boldly for it."

"Then perhaps he'll take you on immediately?"

"If it's done at all there'll be no delay about it my dear," exclaimed Marlow.

"Some one is wanted to do the work, and if I only manage to get into that house again it shall be no fault of mine if ever I leave it."

"And by good conduct you may perhaps have a rise if there should happen to be an opportunity."

"To be sure I may," answered her husband. "One of Mr. Bellamy's partners held a very humble situation there a few years ago, but he was an honest, sober, and industrious fellow, so he got up by degrees; walked over the heads of other people, and is now one of their masters."

"Well husband," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "I don't expect that will ever be your good fortune, but at any rate there's no harm in trying to make the best we can of it. If you are taken into employ there'll be regular wages to look forward to every Saturday night, and our poor children will be better clothed and fed than they have been for a long, long time past. And they'll have some education given them too, and that's perhaps the best thing we can do for the poor things who have got to make their way in the world."

"Aye, aye, Mary," he replied, "they shall have no cause to complain if I do but succeed in my application to Mr. Bellamy. The first thing shall be to

make you and the young ones look a little decent. You shall no longer be seen crawling about in rags and tatters, and afraid of showing yourself in the public streets for fear of being seen by any of your old friends. No, no, all that sort of thing shall soon be at an end, and—"

"My dear husband," interrupted his wife, smiling at the earnestness with which he spoke; "don't you think you are reckoning upon our good fortune a little too soon?"

"Perhaps I may be," he replied, "but I feel certain a great change for the better is speedily about to take place, so you must excuse me if I built a few castles in the air. In my own fancy, I see you looking as you did before trouble overtook us; the children, too, poor things, will be well clothed, well fed, and well looked after, so that they may expect to pass the remainder of their lives in ease and comfort."

"Not without work though," exclaimed Mary.

"No," answered Marlow, "they should be brought up to habits of industry even if I had a large fortune to divide among them. As it is however, I shall have nothing to leave, and they must therefore make up their minds to labour."

"That they are both anxious to do, Frederick."

"So much the better," exclaimed Marlow, "for if they set to at it with good hearts, they'll never think it any misfortune to earn their own living by honest labour. Little Frank shall go to school long enough to obtain a useful education, and then, if he turns out an honest, sharp lad, who knows but I may get him into the same house with myself. I'm building more castles in the air, you see, old girl, but it can't be helped for I feel myself quite a different sort of chap to what I was before I took the pledge."

"I'm glad to see you so cheerful once more," answered his wife; "and now as you have been speaking about your son, I should like to hear what place you have for your daughter. You will wish to see her in some sort of employment I suppose."

"I should be very sorry to bring her up in idleness," he replied. "It is the root of all evil, so I shall leave it for you to say whether Susan shall go out to



service, or be put apprentice to some business that will support her."

"How you do rattle on to be sure, Frederick," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow. "One would think, to hear you talk, that you had already got the situation."

"And if I did not think it pretty near certain I should not speak so confidently about what's to be done," he replied. "Mr. Bellamy has several times hinted about my taking the pledge, and now that I've done so, I believe nothing is more sure than that he will give me employment."

"If you think that," observed the wife, "what a pity it is that you did not take the pledge before."

"It was foolish of me perhaps," answered Marlow, "but it would not have served my purpose any the sooner, for it's only lately that there has been a vacaney in the house, and of course he would not have turned away anybody else merely for the sake of serving me. Now, however, when I saw that there was an opportunity, I followed Mr. Bellamy's advice, and a few hours will prove to you the service it will be to us."

"And you expect he'll take you on immediately?"

"He must have some one to do the work," answered her husband, "and that too without delay, or part of his business must be at a stand still. So I hope this is the last day of my being without anything to do, and a fortunate thing it will be for us too, for we have neither food nor firing in the house, nor the means to provide us with even the most common necessities."

"And but one alternative remained for us,—we must have gone with our family into the workhouse, in all probability to pass the remainder of our days there."

"Not so, Mary," he exclaimed, "for I would have died rather than enter those hateful doors."

"Why that's just what poor John Ashman always said."

"I know he did," replied her husband, "but his feelings on that subject were very different to what mine are. The secret of his dislike to the workhouse was, that he would there be debarred from the drink that he either wouldn't or couldn't do without; but my objec-

tion to it is, that people are never any the better for the life they lead in those places. The world may talk of the contamination of a jail, but in my opinion, a workhouse does quite as much harm."

"In what way does it do harm?" she asked.

"Why it destroys a man's independence for ever afterwards," replied her husband. "For very old people it may be well enough, but those who are young and vigorous ought to put up with poverty and hunger till matters take a turn in their favour. Depend upon it, when folks have once been mean-spirited enough to enter one of those bastiles, they're never good for much afterwards, and are looked on with contempt by their fellow creatures."

"What then are poor starving people to do?"

"Keep their courage up and constantly seek for employment, as I have done," replied Marlow. "You may think it vain of me to put myself up as an example, and yet, for all that, I don't mean to take any particular merit to myself. As for poor people starving, Mary, that never ought to be allowed in a wealthy country like this. The workhouses ought to be pulled down, and if a family is unfortunate enough to need assistance from the parish, let it be given at home, and thousands of pounds a year would be saved of the money that now goes to keep up those large establishments. But this isn't a very interesting subject to you, I dare say Mary, so, as there is nothing in the house to eat, we must go supperless to bed, though,—as I hope,—for the last time."

"The children have already gone."

"And without having anything to satisfy their hunger?"

"They should not have done so if I could have helped it," answered Mary, "but I had neither money nor the means of raising any, and it was almost with a broken heart that I told them it was useless for them to wait up till your return. So there they lie huddled up in yonder corner where they have cried themselves to sleep!"

"And in the morning there'll be the same tale to tell them," exclaimed Marlow with emotion. "We have not even a morsel of dry bread to give to satisfy



the hunger of our starving children. It's horrible to think of Mary, and yet there is some consolation in knowing that to-morrow may put it in my power to make things better for them."

"Suppose you should be disappointed, husband?"

"I dare not think of such a thing," he exclaimed, "Two days already we have scarcely tasted food, and if some favourable change does not take place I should go mad. No, no, my Mary, we'll not look on the worst side of the picture, but go to sleep in the full hope that before mid-day to-morrow I shall return home with good news. Mr. Bellamy has a kind heart, and when I tell him the sufferings we have, and are still enduring he will give me the trial I am going to ask for. It is not charity that I request, but the means of supporting my family by honest industry. So cheer up, and go to rest with a feeling of confidence that our severe trials are now at an end."

Marlow and his wife threw themselves upon their miserable substitute for a bed, but neither of them could sleep for thinking of what the next day might do for them. At an early hour in the morning they rose, dreading the waking of their children, whose hunger they had it not in their power to appease. Fortunately, however, they were not quite so destitute of friends as they had imagined, for a fellow lodger had overheard the children crying for food, and just as Marlow was going out in despair, this good Samaritan entered with a jug of hot coffee, and a plate well loaded with bread-and-butter. Never was kindness better timed, yet the old woman would hear no thanks, but placing what she had brought upon a table, hurried out of the room.

By this time the children were awake, and all seated themselves upon the floor to partake of the meal which had been so bountifully supplied them. Marlow and his wife ate sparingly, that the young folks might have sufficient; and the breakfast being over, the former went out to put into execution the design of which he had spoken on the previous evening.

Fortunately he found Mr. Bellamy disengaged, and in few words explained to him the motive of his visit, and the

grounds upon which he hoped that he might in future be trusted.

"You have come at a fortunate time, Marlow," said the merchant, as soon as he had heard what he had to say; "for I happen to require some one to fill up a vacancy that has just taken place in my establishment. I will not, however, make you any promise, for a man who has already forfeited my good opinion is hardly the one I ought to take into my employ again."

"Ah! sir," exclaimed Marlow, rather alarmed at this, "but when I offended before I did so in consequence of the intemperate habits I had fallen into. Now, however, I have taken the pledge, and no persuasion in the world will ever induce me to break it."

As he said this he exhibited to Mr. Bellamy the medal which he had received on the previous evening.

"This indeed looks as if you were in earnest, Marlow," said the other, in an altered tone; "and if I thought there was any reliance to be placed in your promise of reformation, I would give the matter my most serious consideration."

"Oh! sir," cried Marlow, "if you could only witness the misery that I do at home, you would believe how sincere I am in my determination to do better in future. My family are starving, and if this, my only hope, fails me, the consequence will be despair and death."

"I am half inclined to give you a trial," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, after a pause; "and yet it is not unlikely that you, as many others have done, will forget all your promises as soon as you find yourself once more relieved from the consequences of your former folly."

"Indeed, sir, there is no fear of it," answered Marlow; "for it has taken years to restore my lost character, and never will I forfeit it through an act of intemperance. Besides, those who tempted me are dead or dispersed, and their example will never be forgotten while I live."

"You think, then, your fortitude will remain proof against the temptations of the profligate?"

"I am sure of it," he replied; "for I should be a villain indeed to involve my family a second time in the misery I have already seen them suffer. They are absolutely perishing before my eyes, and if



this my last appeal to you is refused, they will die of want and starvation."

"Have you earned no money, then?"

"Very little indeed, sir," answered Marlow; "so little that it has been barely sufficient to keep me alive."

"Have you had any assistance from the parish?"

"No, sir, I was too proud to apply for it, and would rather have perished in the streets than asked for shelter in the workhouse. I felt that I was still a man, and could not submit to be treated as if I was a beast."

"And amidst all this misery and privation have you been able to maintain your character for honesty?"

"Believe me, sir, I have," answered Marlow. "Some have tried to persuade me to get money by dishonest means, but, thank Heaven, I was strong enough in principle to endure any suffering rather than forfeit my self-esteem."

"And how were you able to resist when you saw so much distress at home?" asked Mr. Bellamy.

"The task was not so difficult as you may think," answered Marlow, "for I never lost the hope that some day or other I should get employment, and for that reason I could put up with the trouble which had been brought on by my own folly. For myself I had no right to complain, and if it had not been for those that were obliged to suffer with me I should have thought the loss of employment was only a just punishment for the dissipation I had been guilty of. So you see, sir, the lesson has not been thrown away upon me, and if you will now put my firmness to the proof you shall never have reason to regret your kindness."

"It shall be so," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy; "the vacant situation shall be yours, and I trust you will be careful not to abuse the reliance I have placed on your word."

"Oh, sir," cried Marlow, "I can't find words to express how grateful I am for what you have done. You have raised me from despair to happiness, and never shall any act of mine give you reason to repent of what you have this day done for me."

"Remember," answered the merchant, "my taking you back is more out of consideration for your family than yourself,"

"And deeply grateful will they ever be to you for it," exclaimed the overjoyed Marlow. "I left my wife doubtful of this happy issue, and great will her rejoicing be when she hears that my application has not been made in vain. But you have not yet said, sir, when you will want me to commence my duties here."

"You may begin from this moment," he replied. "The situation is similar to the one you held before, so you will be able to perform your duties without the slightest difficulty. Let your promise never be forgotten, Marlow, and when proof is given that your reformation is permanent I will not fail to bestow upon you some solid mark of my approbation."

"I am already more than rewarded, sir," exclaimed the other, "and henceforth it shall be my study to prove that I am truly grateful for the kindness you have done me."

"You scarcely expected to be so successful in your application, I suppose, Marlow?"

"Indeed, sir," he replied, "I don't know how it was, but last night when I was speaking to my wife upon the subject, I expressed myself as feeling almost certain that you would not refuse to give me a trial. She, however, knew not your kindness so well as I did, and I believe she has made up her mind for the worst."

"Then the surprise will be the more agreeable."

"Oh, she'll guess how it is when I don't go home directly," answered Marlow; "she'll be sure to think I have succeeded, and that you have taken me on immediately. And I'm glad of it, for sudden joy is almost as bad to bear as to be disappointed in anything that one has made one's mind up to."

"You were speaking of your children a little while ago," said Mr. Bellamy, changing the conversation,— "how many have you?"

"Only two, sir—a boy and a girl."

"Is the boy old enough to work for his money?"

"He's about twelve years of age, sir," replied Marlow, "and is a willing boy enough, but as I know that without education people are liable to turn out badly, I should like to bestow part of my



wages for the next two years in schooling for him. He's tolerably sharp, and if he attends to it there's no saying what good it may be to him by-and-bye.

"You are right there," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, "and I am glad to hear you express yourself in such a manner upon the subject. Let the lad be put to school without delay, and if he and you prove yourselves worthy of it, I will see that something shall be done for him by-and-by. So remember, Marlow, how much depends upon your not breaking the promises you have made."

"If I do, sir, I shall break my pledge, and that I am resolved never to do. I have long since given up strong drinks, and the love of them has so completely left me that I shall never wish to taste them again."

Mr. Bellamy was now called into the counting house to attend upon a customer, and Marlow at once proceeded to the place where his duties required his attendance. He found many persons there, but not one among them had been in the warehouse at the time when he was discharged. They seemed indeed to be a much more steady set of men, and the work that each had to perform was conducted with despatch and regularity. At length, when the hour for dinner arrived, Marlow like the others took his departure, but before he left the place he was met by Mr. Bellamy, who slipped a sovereign into his hand, and then hurried away as if anxious to avoid any expression of gratitude. This was indeed a precious gift to a man situated as Marlow was; and leaving the premises he purchased food for his family, and made his way homewards happier than he had felt for a long time past. The news he took there was partly anticipated through his long absence, and the joy it occasioned may be more easily imagined than described. Mrs. Marlow shed tears of gratitude; the children clapped their hands with joy when they heard that poverty and famine would henceforth be vanished from their home and Marlow himself could do nothing but dilate upon the kindness which he had received from the man whom he was now proud to call his master.

"And now my dear Mary," he said in continuation, "we may look forward to

a glorious career of happiness which will be all the more welcome for the severe trials and vicissitudes we have passed through. Temperance shall be our motto, and by our example we will do all that is in our power to destroy the influence of the hateful Bottle."

"The bane of your poor friend John Ashman and his family," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow. "It haunted him like an evil genius and so far over-mastered him that he had not firmness enough to resist its temptation."

"And see what a deplorable end it brought all his family to," returned her husband. "All died miserably through an accursed habit that was first brought on by thoughtlessness. We have witnessed the effect my dear Mary, and doubly base should we be if we did not exert all the means in our power, to guard our children against the mischief that arises through drunkenness."

"I'm sure, father, I shall never like the sight of strong drink," exclaimed the boy, "for I've heard you say that all our misfortunes came from your being fond of liquor, and I can never forget the misery we've gone through."

"I would have you remember it my dear Frank to the end of your life," exclaimed his father, "for the recollection of our sufferings will be a warning to you never to fall into the same error. In future too, you will see what temperance will do for us, and the contrast I have reason to believe will protect you against temptation. Recollect too, that though I have fortunately succeeded in obtaining the means for our support, it is not often that a man regains the confidence of his master, when once he has forfeited it, as I unfortunately did."

"Did he make any objection to taking you back?" asked his wife.

"Why, at first I was very much afraid I had made the application in vain," answered her husband. "At last however, he said he would think of it, but when I showed him my medal in proof that I had taken the pledge of temperance, he saw that I was in earnest and I had no further difficulty with him. He engaged with me immediately, and it shall be no fault of mine if ever I am thrown out of employment again. We have endured years of privation and it now only remains for us to be careful for the future.



And I have still more glorious news for you; Mr. Bellamy asked me about our children, and he promised that if Frank turns out a good boy, to do something for him when he has received what education I can afford to give him."

"Then altogether, we have reason to consider this day as the most fortunate of our lives," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "It has suddenly turned from poverty to comfortable independence, for though you would have to work hard for maintenance, Frederiek, there will be the consolation of seeing happiness instead of misery among us. And in our good fortune, don't let us forget one friend who, unasked, relieved us when we were in great need."

"Who are you speaking of?" asked her husband.

"The poor woman, our fellow lodger, who this morning supplied me with a breakfast," she replied. "She is a widow and her means are very small, yet knowing own distress she shared with us the little she had."

"You are right to remind me of that good woman;" exclaimed Marlow, "for kindness such as her's demands also the gratitude of our hearts. You say she is poor, and if not proud also, she shall never want while we have a morsel to share with her. But for her our children must have gone till now without food, as they did yesterday. And there are many other things to think of; you and the children must no longer go about in those miserable rags; you must all be well and neatly dressed, and that can be done without difficulty with what we save through having nothing to do with the Bottle."

"But you must look to yourself first Frederiek," answered his wife, "for Mr. Bellamy will hardly like to see you about his place in your present state."

"He would rather see me thus," exclaimed Marlow, "than know that I spent all upon myself whilst those at home were left unheeded. However, to spare you all uneasiness upon that matter, I believe that with a little careful management we may all of us make a very different appearance to what we do at present."

"I understand your meaning," replied Mrs. Marlow. "You think after the hard fare we have had to put up

with our housekeeping expenses need not amount to much and that the rest of the money may go to provide us with decent wearing apparel. And you are quite right, we will live frugally and sparingly till our home has a more comfortable appearance, which shall not be long first if your wages are to be as they were before."

"And that I have every reason to believe they will be," returned her husband, "for I have exactly the same duties to perform, and Mr. Bellamy is not a man to pay his people a low price for his labour. So you know what may be done with our week's money, especially as none of it will now go for drink."

"Ah! when matters grow smooth with us we shall have abundance, and something even to spare."

"And that which we have to spare shall be put into the Savings' Bank," returned Marlow. "It will increase rarely there if we suffer it to remain a few years, and then I shall be able to take a little shop for you Mary, so that you may have something to depend on if I die first. Egad, old girl, I feel as happy as a prince now that I see my way clearly before me, for, with want driven from our door, what have we to do but set a good example to our neighbours. But we must talk over our happiness when I come home to-night, for my time's up, and I must get back to the warehouse."

With a light heart and elastic step Marlow left his house and he took himself to his business. Mary and her children were no less delighted at the change in their prospects, and it seemed to them like a dream when they compared that day with the melancholy one which had preceded it.

## CHAPTER II.

TEMPERANCE REIGNS IN THE FAMILY OF FREDERICK MARLOW, AND BLESSINGS ATTEND UPON HIM.

Two years passed away, and Marlow by prudence and foresight was able to take a small house, which he furnished in a manner rather superior for a person in his class of life. In this there was



# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





nothing to blame, for it is our first duty to make home comfortable, and the vanity is rather a commendable one which prompts a man to study his domestic comfort. In this he was admirably assisted by his wife, and the house soon assumed an appearance of respectability, but too seldom witnessed in the homes of men who have equal means of providing things which all do not consider necessary alike. His family too was now still further increased by the addition of Mrs. Edwards, the widow who had so kindly provided them with a breakfast when they had not the means of getting one. And a most valuable acquisition she was too, for her temper was naturally very cheerful, and an agreeable companion she proved to Mrs. Marlow, who had few friends and no inclination to increase their number.

As for Marlow himself, his regular habits and industry were so highly appreciated by Mr. Bellamy, that he frequently trusted him in confidential matters, and expressed the pleasure it afforded him that he had again taken into his service a man who was likely to prove so useful. Praise from such a quarter did not fail to excite Marlow to a still more rigid performance of his duties; he devoted his whole time and energies to the service of his employer, frequently being at his post before the customary time, and remaining long after everybody had left. For this he was rebuked by some of his companions; others openly asserted to him that he was only trying to gain favour with the 'governor;' and some even went as far as to threaten him with mischief if he tried to exalt himself at their expense. Thus there was no end of the derision he was obliged to bear because he was a teetotaller, this he could bear with the greatest composure, for he knew that he had taken a wise course, and was content to pursue it still.

One morning when he was going rather early to his employ he was met by Thompson, his former associate. The wretched man now looked the very picture of dissipation—his form was covered with rags—his body bent and feeble with premature old age, and, judging from his appearance, he was suffering from hunger. Though disgusted with the hideous sight, Marlow

could not pass him without recognition,—

"How is this, Thompson?" he exclaimed. "Is it drink that has brought all this about?"

"Drink," answered the other, with a wild laugh; "how can it be drink when I can't raise money to get enough of it. Sometimes I don't have a drop the whole day through, and then I'm down on my luck as you see me now."

"Haven't you had anything to drink, this morning?"

"Not a drop, as I am a living man."

"And yet you seem to be stupified."

"It's not with drink though, but through going without it."

"How do you make that out?" asked Marlow.

"Very easily," replied the sot; "I'm so used to drops of gin that I'm but a poor shattered creature as you see, when I'm obliged to do without it. I've no animal spirits of my own, Fred, and am forced to keep myself going with those I can buy at the wine vaults."

"And you drink them I suppose in preference to purchasing food for the support of your body."

"Bless your heart, it's very little food that I want," replied Thompson. "A pennyworth of bread would last me well a couple of days, but if I go without my liquor I always fall into the state you now see me in."

"Horrible!" exclaimed the other; "this is a frightful account you give of yourself, my poor fellow, and I should have thought a little resolution might have cured you of a habit that has made you an object loathsome to look at."

"How can I give it up altogether, when going without liquor for only one day makes me feel as I do now? Oh, it's easy to talk, old fellow; but I suppose you wouldn't stand a drop of something just to put a little fresh life into me?"

"Not on any account," answered Marlow. "I'll not encourage a vice that has done so much mischief, but if you'll take anything to eat I'll pay for it cheerfully."

"You will? Give us the money then."

"No," exclaimed the other, "I'll not trust you with money because I know well enough that it would be spent in



the first public house you come to ; but if you'll say what you can eat I'll go into a shop and buy it."

"Then you may keep your kindness to yourself," answered the drunkard ; "for if I'm not to be trusted with the money, I'll not put myself under any obligation to you."

"What is it you want to have, Thompson?"

"Gin first of all, and then perhaps I might be able to get down a morsel of food."

"Then I cannot assist you, though my heart feels for you," said Marlow. "I have foresworn drinking myself, and will not encourage it in others."

"In that case I must beg till I get money enough for a half quatern. That will set me to rights, and if you were to see me a few minutes afterwards you wouldn't believe me to be the same man."

"Are you then reduced to such a pitiable state that you can exist only upon that which has brought you to this deplorable state? Do you never reflect—never think of the crime which a man commits when he thus makes hideous God's own image?"

"What would be the use of thinking when there's no chance of curing myself?" demanded Thompson.

"Have you ever set yourself earnestly to try?"

"I don't know that I've done that," replied the other, "but I've often wished I could do with less spirits. I know they've brought me to what I am, and would have cured myself of the habit if I had known how to set about it."

"Why not do as I have, my boy?"

"What's that?"

"Take the pledge never to drink intoxicating liquors."

"No, I'm determined never to do that."

"Why are you so determined, Thompson?"

"Because if I took the pledge I should only break it, and I don't want to add one crime to another. I've no fortitude when drink is in the way, and what's more, I don't see why I should give it up when going without it even for a single day makes me feel as ill as I am now."

"But it may be done gradually, and

in the course of a month or so you would feel yourself able to do without it altogether. Just give it a trial, and I know before long you'll thank me for the hint."

"Oh, it's easy for people like you to talk," exclaimed Thompson, "but it's a hard matter for such as I am to deprive themselves of the only thing they delight in. I now feel ready to sink into the very earth Fred, and yet you won't give me a paltry two-pence to save me from all this suffering."

"It's food that you require," answered the other, "and I have said I'll get anything you may fancy to eat."

"I'll have none of it," muttered the profligate, savagely. "Give me gin, Fred Marlow—give me gin I say, or you'll presently be sorry for it."

"What!—do you threaten me because I refuse?"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of any violence," answered Thompson bitterly, "for I have'n't strength enough left to raise my arm against any man."

"What did you mean then by saying I should be sorry for refusing what you asked for?"

"You'll soon see what I want," he replied. "I'm sinking, Marlow—sinking fast, and—you'll—you'll not—give me—"

The wretched man could utter no more—all power seemed in a moment to forsake him, and, reeling backward a step or two, he would have fallen to the ground but for the support afforded by Marlow. His face had now assumed the cadaverous hue of death, and in the full belief that the miserable victim of intemperance had finished his earthly sufferings, Marlow, with the assistance of a stranger, carried him into an adjacent doctor's shop. Upon trying his pulse it was discovered that life was not extinct, and the proper stimulants having been applied, the patient soon showed signs of returning animation. During these few minutes Marlow exhibited the utmost concern for the sufferings of the unfortunate, and as soon as he opened his eyes, inquired if there was anything he could get for him.

"It's no use saying anything to him just now," exclaimed the surgeon; "for though partially revived, his mind is still steeped in oblivion. You know something of this man I suppose?"



"I do," replied Marlow.

"Then it is necessary that he should be conveyed without delay to his home."

"I know not where he lodges," answered the other;—nay I have my doubts whether his only resting place at nights is not in the streets."

"In that case he must be taken to the workhouse," said the doctor gravely. "He requires much care and attention, and I am much mistaken if he has not need of food."

"I'll take him in a coach to the workhouse if you think the people there will admit him."

"They'll hardly refuse to admit him, I should think in such an emergency," answered the other. "The man must die if no assistance is offered him, and I have my doubts whether it is not too late as it is to save his life. He is sinking from exhaustion, and judging from appearances I imagine his present condition has been brought on by want of food, and too great an indulgence in strong drinks."

"You are quite right, sir," exclaimed Marlow; "he has drank freely, and from what he told me just now, he seldom eats, and then very sparingly. Yesterday, however, he could get no liquor, and when I met him a short time ago he seemed to be suffering through want of his usual excitement."

"Did you give him anything to drink?"

"He asked me to do so, but I refused; offering however, to get whatever he liked to eat. And now," continued Marlow, "I'm sorry I didn't let him have a small quantity of liquor, for it might have had the effect of rallying his spirits."

"It certainly would have done that," replied the surgeon, "but the effect would not have been of any long continuance, and you therefore did perfectly right in preventing his having any liquor. The constitution, as you may perceive, is entirely destroyed, and though he may linger on for some time to come, it will be in a deplorable state of physical, as well as mental prostration. And this is the effect of those ardent liquors in which so many people are mad enough to indulge to excess. This man, I dare say has been an habitual drunkard for years."

"Many years," replied Marlow, "and

no advice or persuasion could prevail upon him to break himself of the vice."

"It's a great pity," replied the doctor, "that men do not suffer themselves to reflect upon the consequence of a free indulgence in drink. They think only of what they universally call the pleasures of the moment, and follow a course of dissipation that at length brings them to the state you see this poor man in. And yet we medical men ought not to decry intemperance, for it does more than any thing else towards the support of our profession."

"Do you know me Thompson?" exclaimed Marlow, as the wretched man fixed his meaningless eyes upon him.

"He knows nothing yet, my dear sir," interposed the doctor, "and it will be some little time before he recovers from the stupor that has paralyzed all his faculties. The medicine I have given him will by and by cause him to rally, and it will then be necessary to bestow upon him the greatest care and attention."

"Which I'm afraid there is no chance of his receiving in the workhouse," observed Marlow. "As there is no alternative, however, I must take him there, and it will then be my care to see that he wants for nothing so long as he remains there. If he ever recovers this may be the means of reclaiming him, and should he then become steady and correct in his conduct, I will see that the rest of his life goes smoothly and well."

"From what you say," exclaimed the other, "I suppose you are not one of those who indulge in excesses?"

"I do not now," answered Marlow, "but to my shame it must be confessed I have been as bad as the worst of them."

"May I ask how you broke yourself of the habit?"

"Not without some trouble I can assure you," replied the other. "For a long time I was incorrigible but at length when poverty, ruin, nay, starvation itself came within my doors I roused myself as from some terrible dream. My whole conduct then appeared in its true light, but instead of reproaching myself for the madness I had been guilty of, I set about devising the best method for releasing myself and family from the



hideous destruction I had brought down. It was not an easy task to do that, as you may imagine, for the world places little reliance upon men who are known to have been confirmed drunkards, and day after day did I wander from house to house in search of employment, yet always without success. It was frightful to see my wife and children famishing for want of food, and clothed in beggarly rags, yet so it was, and at last I began to give way to despair when a lucky thought struck me that afterwards proved the making of me."

"Pray what was that?"

"Why I resolved to take the pledge and no sooner had I done so than my old master believed there was some reliance to be placed in me, and I was taken back into his employ, where I have remained from that day to this. The frowns of fortune are now changed into smiles, and I flatter myself there are few men who can boast of a happier home or a more contented family than I can."

"Your example is worthy to be followed," exclaimed the doctor, "and so well pleased am I at having met with a man of such integrity of purpose, that I should much like to form an acquaintance with you."

"I'm afraid, sir, your acquaintance with me will afford you very little gratification."

"The society of an honest, upright man is always desirable," answered the surgeon, "and I shall always be happy to see you whenever you find it convenient to pay me a visit." Then giving him his card, he added: "As you see by this, my name is Melville, and I shall at all times be happy to see you, that we may talk at large on the subject upon which we were just now speaking."

"Upon my word, sir, I have been lucky in meeting with you," said Marlow, highly gratified with the candour and kind feeling of his new acquaintance. "I have few friends, and except in this instance have no wish to add to their number, for my mind is in one way or other generally pretty well occupied. There is, however, one favour that I should like to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"That you will, when convenient, call and see this poor man, who I wish to

live long enough to see and confess the faults that have brought him to this fearful state."

"Under any other circumstances," replied Mr. Melville, "I should not like to intrude myself upon another man's practice, but as I happen to be intimately acquainted with the gentleman who has charge of the sick in the workhouse, I can now and then call to see this poor fellow without giving any offence. I must however tell you plainly that I believe all the skill in the world will never restore this man to the health which he has so thoughtlessly trifled with. I have not examined him it is true, but it is easily to be seen that his constitution has entirely given way, and he will pass the remainder of his days in pain and misery."

"At any rate we must do the best we can to soften his afflictions," observed Marlow, "and there is the consolation of knowing that he will not be able to get any liquor in the place he is going to."

"Unless it should be ordered, as is sometimes the case, by the medical officer of the establishment."

"Well, even in that case," exclaimed the other, "the quantity allowed would be very small, and in time, perhaps, there would be no occasion for any. But I'm hindering you now, sir, I see, so I'll just order a coach, that this poor fellow may be got to the workhouse without delay, and in a short time I'll look in again to know what you think of his case."

A vehicle was then called from an opposite stand, and Thompson was lifted into it. This done Marlow shook hands with his new acquaintance, and then seating himself by the side of the sick man, they were driven off to the workhouse, where, after some little squabbling and many frivolous objections on the part of those in office, the pauper drunkard gained admittance. Marlow would have seen him conveyed to his bed in the infirmary, but it was now full time to be at business, and slipping a half-crown into the hand of one of the nurses, he left the place, heartily glad to turn his back upon the cold, repulsive walls that inclosed the poor.

During the remainder of that day he could think of nothing but the shocking



scene of which he had been a witness. The lesson was one that must have been felt, by even the most callous heart, and Marlow failed not to relate what had passed to all his fellow workmen, who he knew were too much inclined to drinking. By these he was only laughed at, but their derision gave him no concern, for he knew they would afterwards think of what he had said, and if once they reflected on the consequences of intemperance there would be some reason to hope for amendment. In that respect then he believed that the example of Thompson would not be thrown away upon others who were given to excess. Those thoughts occupied his mind pretty well all the day, for the lesson was not to be regarded carelessly, and at night when he returned home he related to his wife and Mrs. Edwards, the sad spectacle which he had witnessed.

"It was a shocking sight, I can tell you," he said in conclusion, "for the poor fellow seemed to have lost all reason, and though I spoke to him several times, and called him by name, he took no more notice of me than if he had been born an idiot. And only to think that all this had been brought about by too free a use of ardent drinks."

"You hear what your father says, Frank?" said Mrs. Marlow, addressing her son. "Tippling sooner or later, always meets with punishment, my boy, and I hope you will profit by the examples you so often hear of."

"If I thought he would not profit by them, I would rather see him in his coffin even at this early age. But Frank knows better than to follow a vice that lowers man into a brute, and I have also the satisfaction of knowing that as soon as he leaves school he is to be taken into Mr. Bellamy's employ, where he will be constantly under my own eye."

"Has Mr. Bellamy told you as much?"

"He has," replied the husband. "I saw him this morning when I went in, and thinking he might be angry at my being rather over my time, I went up to him and related to him all about poor Thompson. Instead of speaking sharp, however, he said he had every reason to be satisfied with my conduct and that as a reward for it Frank should be taken into the warehouse as soon as I please."

"There my boy," exclaimed Mrs. Edwards, "you see what good conduct does for people."

"Aye, and my Frank will never disgrace his father and mother, I know," said Mrs. Marlow, fondly kissing the cheek of her boy.

"And what do you say of Susan?" asked her husband.

"Say!" she exclaimed, "why I can never say enough good of her. She's steady, industrious, and affectionate to her parents, and if that is not enough to make us proud of her, I don't know what is. But I say, Frederick," she added, returning to the former subject, "you have not told us yet when you think of taking Frank into the warehouse?"

"Oh, there's time enough to think of that my dear," he replied; "the boy is getting on very well, at school, and as I hope it will be his good fortune to thrive in the world, I should like him to have a good sound education, that he may not be disgraced if he should ever get into society that is higher than you and I can ever expect to mingle with."

"How you talk!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow in a tone that showed her vanity had been touched by these words.

"Well my dear," he replied, "you know it has always been a weakness of mine to build castles in the air. And, if not carried too far, I don't know that it does a man any harm, for it excites him to try his best, and that's the grand secret that has been the making of half our wealthiest people."

"But it will never make our Frank more than our present prospects lead us to hope for."

"Wait a few years, and we shall see how matters will turn out," replied her husband. "It shall be no fault of mine if he don't prove a smart active man of business, and if he has but a moderate share of talent I don't see why he shouldn't make his way in the world as well as anybody else."

"Aye, and he will too," observed Mrs. Edwards, "for he's honest in all his dealings even as a boy, and depend upon it he won't change when he grows up to be a man. Besides he always speaks the truth, however much it may be against him so that by-and-bye if ever he gets into business for himself, people will be



able to take his word for anything, and that will be sure to gain him favour."

"Frank was always a favourite of yours, Mrs. Edwards," observed the father.

"I love both your children," she replied, "and good reason have I for it too, for they were kind to me when I was ill, and I'm not one to forget favours whether I receive them from children or grown people. But they have a good example before them in their parents, so it would be strange indeed if they had turned out otherwise than they have."

"You flatter us there," exclaimed Marlow laughing, "though I'll admit we endeavour as far as possible to bring up our children so as to be useful members of society. And we should be base if we neglected our duty to them when we know the consequences of omitting to instil proper notions into their minds. Look for instance at the miserable object I have seen to-day, who would probably have been a very different sort of person to what he is at present. A good example would have made him respected by his fellow men, but a bad one has rendered him one of the most degraded of human beings."

"Do you think there is no hope of his recovery?" asked Mrs. Marlow.

"I'm afraid from what the doctor told me there is none," answered her husband "He may struggle on with life for some time, but it will be with so much misery to himself that existence will prove a curse."

"And all through his own folly, that led him to ruin his constitution with drink."

"That has certainly been the root of the evil," answered Marlow, "but it is to be hoped his sufferings will prove a useful warning to others. Men of headstrong passions are not to be moved by anything but fear, and it is to be hoped many will tremble for themselves when they learn the wretched fate of this unfortunate man."

"But drinking was not his only fault," observed his wife, "for he is an idle, worthless fellow, that would not work even for the liquor he swallowed in such quantities."

"He has been a crawling vagabond upon God's earth for a long time past," answered Marlow; "but I remember

the time when there was not a steadier or more industrious man in the place than was Joe Thompson. At last however like myself and John Ashman he took to frequenting public-houses, and grew to be such a reckless sot that he was no longer of any use in the warehouse, so one day all of us that preferred drinking to the performance of our duties were discharged,—and an awful day that was for every one of us."

"And you," interposed Mrs. Edwards, were I believe, the only one that did any good afterwards."

"Unfortunately that was the case," replied Marlow. "You have often heard me tell the story of poor John Ashman and his family. The wife murdered by her husband under the excitement of drink; that husband himself afterwards dying in a madhouse; their daughter perishing by her own hand; and the son, the last of the family, meeting his death on the scaffold for a murder he had committed! And all this resulted from one cause—the Bottle!"

"But the example seems to have been thrown away upon this man, Thompson."

"It was indeed," replied Marlow, "but upon me it had a salutary effect, and deterred me from an indulgence that I saw had produced so much ruin. It was no easy matter to break it off though, for the habit had got a strong hold of me, and it was not till Ashman had slain his wife, that I could entirely give up the use of spirits."

"And what a blessing the change has brought upon us," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow. "At that time we and our children were barely covered with rags and tatters; we scarcely knew the taste of meat, and many a night have we had to prowl about the streets because we could not raise money enough to procure a lodging. And now look at the difference; we have every comfort that people in our situation can desire, our home is always happy and cheerful, and our children bid fair to turn out all that we could wish. So if this contrast is not enough to make us content with our lot, I know not what would be."

"Aye," added her husband, "and what is better still, we have saved money to help us in case of a rainy day; money that might have gone into the pockets of the publicans if I had not taken



the pledge to shun them and their houses. Besides, I have now discovered that real enjoyment is not to be found in these places, and that if a man has any time to spare in the course of the year he had better spend it with his family in a visit to some nice quiet country place. By-the-bye, Mary," he continued, "talking of that, reminds me that Mr. Bellamy asked me the other day if I should want a holiday this summer, and I was going to ask if you would have any objection to take a trip somewhere."

"I should like it of all things," she replied, "but of course you have considered within yourself whether we can afford to spend the money."

"Oh that wont make any difference," exclaimed her husband, "for Mr. Bellamy told me that my wages should go on all the same; and as we can live as cheap in one place as another, I have been thinking it might be as well to accept the offer."

"And our children?"

"Ah, the young folks must go with us as a matter of course," he replied. "I should not enjoy myself without them, and as for our home, Mrs. Edwards, I dare say, will take care of that for me."

"To be sure I will," replied the old lady, "and glad shall I be to give you all an opportunity of having such a pleasant holiday."

"Then it's a settled thing," exclaimed Marlow gaily. "I'll speak to Mr. Bellamy to-morrow, and tell him I shall accept his kind offer."

"But don't you think it will be a very dull time for Mrs. Edwards?"

"Mrs. Edwards shall not be forgotten, I can tell you," exclaimed her husband. "We shall have a fortnight to spend in the country, and as I don't care about being any very long time in the country, I shall only stop with you the first week, and our friend here will pass the remainder of the time with you."

"But you'll be so uncomfortable in your bachelor sort of life."

"Not a bit of it, if I know you are enjoying yourselves," he replied, good humouredly. "So now it's all arranged, except as to the place we shall fix upon going to. Now some people like Gravesend because its handy to town, but for

my own part, if we are really to enjoy ourselves, I should prefer going where we can have quiet and nice romantic scenery. There's Richmond, for instance, or twenty other places, but we'll leave the selection till another day, by which time you'll have had an opportunity of making your own choice."

Never did proposition afford more general satisfaction; Mrs. Marlow was delighted at the thought of once more getting a peep at the dear delightful country;—the children were in extasies at the prospect of a ramble in the green fields of which they had heard so much and seen so little, and Mrs. Edwards was happy because she saw that everybody else was so. As for Marlow himself, he was perhaps the happiest of the whole group, for his heart swelled with pleasure at the joy which he saw had been inspired by his suggestion.

### CHAPTER III.

A VISIT TO THE COUNTRY PROVES TO BE THE SOURCE OF MUCH RATIONAL ENJOYMENT.—THE GIPSEY AND HER PROPHECY.

THE period for the anticipated holiday was soon fixed, and with little difficulty it was arranged that they should take lodgings at some cottage or farm-house in the neighbourhood of Richmond, where they would be in the full enjoyment of some of the most romantic scenery in the world. Then came all the bustle of preparation on the part of the females; Mrs. Marlow projecting what should be done, and Mrs. Edwards carrying those projects into execution. The time chosen was during the summer holidays of the children, so that no school time should be lost, and all looked forward with joyous anticipation to the days of happiness that were in store for them. And this, reader, is but *one* of those exquisite delights that it is in the power of every man to ensure if he will but be rational and temperate in his habits.

In the meantime Mrs. Marlow, and her friend Mrs. Edwards took the pledge; not that there was any real occasion for it, as far as they themselves were concerned, but as an example for



THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





others to do the same. In fact their own happy and flourishing condition incited them to prevail upon their neighbours to become converts, and they lost no opportunity that they thought might assist the good cause in which they were engaged. And they succeeded to their heart's content, for many who had at first laughed at them, were struck by the happy change which had taken place in their domestic concerns, and willingly adopted the plan which must necessarily advance them in the scale of rational beings.

At length the morning arrived on which the Marlow family were to take their departure for Richmond. Boxes filled with the necessary changes of wearing apparel stood ready near the door; the children were in anxious expectation of the return of their father who had gone to the warehouse to see that he had left nothing undone, and good Mrs. Edwards shedding tears of regret at the thought of a separation from her friends, though it would be only for a week. But Marlow did not keep them in suspense; he returned by the time he had promised, and it yet wanted half an hour to that at which he had ordered a cab to be at the door, to convey them to the wharf from which the Richmond steam-boats started. Though always cheerful, he now seemed to be more so than ever, a circumstance that was remarked by his wife, who, seeing that he had some pleasant news to communicate, anxiously inquired what had happened?

"Oh, something that will surprise you," he replied with forced gravity;—"I'm going to lose my situation."

"Good heavens! lose your situation!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, turning pale with apprehension.

"Yes my dear," he replied, "I am not to return to it again. But you are alarmed I see, so to keep you no longer upon thorns, I must tell you that I have got a much better one waiting for me against my return."

"Oh!" she sighed, "but you will never find as kind a master as Mr. Bellamy."

"Well then, the truth is, I am not going to leave him at all," exclaimed her husband. "He has given me a rise which will put an additional ten shillings

a week in our pockets, so our prospects are growing better every year you see."

"But I'm afraid somebody has been turned away to make room for you."

"Nothing of the kind," he replied; "Tom Sweeting, a very sharp fellow, who was at the head of the warehouse department, has been taken into the counting house, and I am to have the situation he leaves vacant. So you see Mary, no one will suffer by our lift in the world!"

"I'm glad of that," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "and the more especially as it shows that Mr. Bellamy is satisfied with your attention to his business."

"Satisfied!" returned her husband; "why he sent for me just now to go into his own private room, and,—of all things in the world what do you think he wanted me for?"

"Indeed Frederick I can't guess;—unless it was to tell you that he should be very angry if you remained away from business beyond the time he has given you for your holiday."

"No, it was not for that," answered Marlow;—"he told me he very much approved of my conduct; wished me a happy time at Richmond, and while shaking my hand, slipped a five pound note into it to pay our expences."

"How kind of him," exclaimed Mary; "and yet we were not in need of such generosity."

"So I told him," replied her husband; "I explained about the little bit of money we've put by in the Savings' Bank, but he wouldn't take any refusal, saying that the present he made me was richly deserved, and that it was given for the purpose of increasing the pleasures of our holiday. Ah, Mary, you can't think what gratification I felt at hearing so much praise from a good man like that."

"If I had been by I should have cried for very joy."

"Well, and do you know I could hardly help doing the same thing," exclaimed Marlow. "I stood staring at him like a fool, and not a word could I get out about gratitude or anything else so he went on talking, and at last, he told me of the rise he intended for me, and then I believe I must have looked more like an idiot than ever."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Edwards, "it never rains but it pours; and at any rate you



have the consolation of knowing that your master's kindness was deserved. He sees, I dare say, that good servants are scarce, and experience tells him that when they *are* found the best way to keep them to their duty is to give them a little encouragement."

"Why he has always encouraged me as far as kind words go," replied Marlow. "He takes more notice of me than he does of any other man in his employ, which is an honour that I think will repay me for any little extra attention I may pay to his business."

"The truth is," observed his wife, "he has every reason to be satisfied with your steady conduct. You never go to your work in the morning with a headache in consequence of the last night's dissipation, but perform your duties with a clear brain so that everything goes on smoothly and as it ought. And I dare say if he looks round among those in his employ, he sees some that are both unable and unwilling to work because the liquor they drank on the over night had made them unfit for the labours of the day."

"There are not many men of that description in Mr. Bellamy's employ I can assure you," replied her husband. "He is a great enemy to intemperance, and soon gets rid of those that are given to drinking. Be that as it may, however, he has supplied us with the means of making our holiday a very pleasant one and when I get back to the warehouse he shall see that I'll do all in my power to prove that I am not unthankful for his kindness."

"But we shall hardly want to spend so much money in pleasure," observed Mrs. Marlow.

"But we will spend it though, and every farthing of it too," answered her husband. "He gave it for that purpose, and I don't see that we have any right to make any other use of it. We shall be able to make longer jaunts into the country, and the more we see of the beauties of nature, Mary, the more reason we shall have to be thankful for the firm resolution we have had in avoiding a vice that must have kept us in poverty all our lives. Had I remained a drunkard, the pleasure we are going to enjoy would never have been known to us or our children. And that reminds me of

poor Thompson, who still is on a sick bed in the workhouse, and I'm afraid is not likely to rise from it."

"Have you seen him lately?" asked Mrs. Marlow.

"I called there just now on my way home," answered her husband, "for I didn't like the idea of going out a pleasuring without seeing whether there was any thing I could do to soften his sufferings."

"And you think he's not likely to recover?"

"I don't see the least chance of it; and the doctor says he has so undermined his constitution with drink that that all the medicine he can give him will never do anything more than just keep him alive for a little while; and sorry enough I was to hear him say so, for the poor fellow—though too late—seems to see his error; and I verily believe if he had recovered he would have been steady in his habits."

"Does he seem reconciled to being where he is?"

"He didn't say much about it," answered Marlow, "but it was easy enough to see that he has the same abhorrence as ever at being in a workhouse. However, as he has had time for reflection, he no doubt sees that his being there is entirely through his own fault."

"And a very shocking reflection it must be," observed Mrs. Marlow. "How bitterly he must reproach himself when he thinks that but for his intemperate habits he might at this very time have been as happy as we are."

"Well," exclaimed her husband, "there are some hard-hearted people that say he deserves all that he has to suffer; and you can't convince them otherwise, though perhaps they may have faults of their own, if they could only see them. There's no doubt he brought all this upon himself, but for all that, I think if he had recovered he would have become a better man, and may be his example would have been useful to other people that can't refrain from drink."

"Then you think it impossible for him to recover?"

"I'm no judge of such matters myself," answered Marlow, "But the doctor tells me there's no hope, and of course he ought to know whether there is or not. Be that as it may, however



I have requested the doctor to let him have all the comforts he may require, and that there might be no excuse for withholding them, I left money to procure whatever might be considered necessary. We can afford to do a kind action you know, Mary, and it is our duty to soften the sufferings of our fellow creatures whenever it lies in our power to do so."

"And I needn't tell you, my dear husband," she replied, "that I am always willing to give our mite to those who deserve it."

"Perhaps you mean to infer that we might have given our assistance to some more worthy object?"

"Nay," she replied, "I meant not that, for I know you are the better judge on such matters than myself. You say Thompson looks back upon his past life with regret, and if he is sincere in it, I should be as glad as any one to render his last hours as easy as possible."

"And that can only be done with kindness."

"Kindness in adversity," answered Mrs. Marlow, "is a duty that one Christian owes to another, though I'm afraid it is not often practised. Believe me then, I am truly glad that you have done something for poor Thompson, for as we are going to take our pleasure, it will add not a little to it to know that we have performed our duty towards an unfortunate fellow creature."

"Besides," added Marlow, "depend upon it, money applied with a well intended purpose is never missed. And even if it were, there's a thousand ways that we might make it up again if we like to try. For my own part I would rather give up this pleasure trip of our's altogether, than have the pain of knowing that I had left this unfortunate man pining for the want of a few necessaries. But hark! the cab has just stopped at the door, so we must bustle about, or the steam-boat will start before we get there."

Boxes and packages were now quickly transferred to the vehicle, and then, after taking leave of Mrs. Edwards, the holiday-makers stowed themselves as well as they could in the inside, and away they were rattled off to the place where they were to embark. Never was a happier little group seen in this world.

The children were exhilarated with the ride; Mrs. Marlow felt happy because they were so; and her husband as he saw the countless thousands trudging through the streets whilst he was enjoying the luxury of a ride, wondered within himself whether there was one among them that felt as happy as he was. These reflections were however soon put an end to, for on their arrival at the wharf the packet was just going to start, so there was no time to lose, and their luggage having been put on board, they soon followed, and in a minute or two afterwards they were steaming it at a rare rate up the river. And what a deal to call forth the wonder and admiration of the young folks! Dozens of other steam-boats were there, some going one way, some another, and all crowded with passengers either for business or recreation. Then there were barges and boats that seemed sluggish in comparison with the more mighty vessels, and that danced up and down in the rough water they left behind as if nothing could save them from going to the bottom. Besides all this there were noble bridges to pass under, and quaint looking piers to stop at, when more passengers were to be taken on board; but at length bridges and piers became of more rare occurrence, and then they arrived at a part of the river where on both sides the beauties of nature were to be seen in all their splendour. A glorious trip is it to Richmond for those even who have often taken it, but to those who go for the first time, the scene possesses all the charms of fairy land. Every turn of the stream displays fresh objects to call forth wonder and delight. Here wide spreading fields tinted with every hue that is most pleasant to the eye;—further on are noble mansions, whose delightful lawns sweep gracefully down to the very banks of the river, and if the eye is turned on the opposite side we see stately woods, that form a magnificent contrast to the more open parts of the country we are passing through. The whole country is indeed so surpassingly rich that our voyagers regretted exceedingly when they found themselves along-side, and close to the handsome looking bridge that spans the river from Richmond to the opposite side of the stream.

On landing they took a stroll through



the town, and from thence proceeded to the celebrated hill where their eyes were regaled with a magnificent sight for which they were little prepared. They stood mute with astonishment, as their gaze was directed from object to object, each of which seemed to claim more admiration than the one that had preceded it. Hills and dales, woodlands and meadows, lay before them as on a map, with the beautifully winding river pursuing its silent course, and chequered with numerous small boats, each filled with pleasure seekers, who sought this sylvan retreat in which to pass a day of rational amusement. Here Marlow and his family could have remained for hours, but it was necessary to provide themselves with a lodging, and they, therefore, proceeded through the park, about half a mile beyond which they came to a cottage of rather superior appearance, and where, on moderate terms they were able to procure all the accommodation they required. Their luggage was then sent for, and with little trouble they found themselves as comfortably situated as if they had passed a day in endeavouring to suit themselves.

It is not necessary that we should detail the various delightful rambles that they enjoyed in this beautiful region. Suffice it to say they lost no time in idleness during the week that Marlow was to remain with his family. Every morning some new walk was proposed, or if the place was too far distant to be visited on foot, a cheap conveyance was engaged to take them to the spot. In this manner a week soon glided away, and as Marlow was about to leave on the following morning to make way for Mrs. Edwards, it was agreed that his last stroll with his family should be through some of the most romantic parts of the park. This excursion afforded them perhaps as much gratification as any they had taken, for the scenery is continually varied, and the trees, green and vigorous, give it a charm that it is impossible to express. So enraptured were they with it that the sun set before they thought of returning home, and the shades of evening were falling when just as they had reached the extremity of the park they were accosted by a female whose singular attire, and olive complexion, announced that she belonged to

the tribe of gipseys who prowl about that neighbourhood during the summer season.

"Would you like to have your fortune told, good lady?" she asked, with the whine peculiar to that extraordinary class of persons. "Cross my hand with silver, and I'll tell you truly what's to happen to you and your children; whether you are to be lucky or unlucky, and if young master and miss are to be rich or poor."

Mrs. Marlow was hardly proof against this invitation, for like most of her sex, she had some little faith in the prophetic powers of this class of persons. She was, however, ashamed of exhibiting her weakness in the presence of her husband, and was passing on, when the woman, closely following at their heels repeated the jargon nearly in the same words as before. Marlow saw that his wife really felt inclined to have her fortune told, and laughingly saying, that now was the time for her to know her destiny, he went on a few paces, though not so far but he could overhear every word that was said. Nothing reluctant, Mrs. Marlow gave the required piece of silver, and the gypsy, after examining her hand with apparent attention, said glibly enough,—

"I see by the lines in your palm that you have passed through much trouble, and that by patience and temperance you are now well to do in the world. Your husband is a reformed drunkard, but is now in the favour of his old master, and will yet live to ride in his carriage. You laugh at what I say, lady, but the time will come when you'll confess that the gipsy fortune-teller you met in Richmond Park told you truly. Your children too will grow up to be a joy and credit to you; the young lady will marry some wealthy man, and the young gentleman will rise to high honour and renown. You and your husband will live to see all this and will die full of years and happiness."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Marlow, "if only half that you have told me should come true what a happy woman I should be."

"It will all turn out as I have said," answered the fortune-teller, "I have studied palmistry and read the stars too long to mistake the lines in your hand



or to be deceived by the planet that rules your fate. The good shall meet their reward both in this world and in that which is to come."

"You speak with confidence," returned Mrs. Marlow; "but we are now struggling with the world, and shall be well content if we never advance beyond our present condition."

"But it is your fate to advance," answered the gipsy, "and neither man nor woman can resist their destiny, whether it be for good or for evil."

"So I have myself been weak enough to believe," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "but my husband has pretty well laughed me out of the notion; for he knows the world better than I do, and I therefore yield to his opinions rather than to my own."

"Ah, my good lady!" replied the fortune-teller, "but men folks always laugh at what they don't understand, and who among them give themselves the trouble to inquire whether there is truth in palmistry, or not? Remember the words I have spoken to you this day, and the time will come when you will own that they were not uttered idly. Besides what interest can I have in telling you a falsehood?"

"That of making money by it, my good woman."

"Nay, haven't I received my fee before hand?"

"You have, but there may be the hope of receiving a still further reward if this prediction is a favourable one."

"I am no impostor, lady," exclaimed the gipsy, "but foretell destinies exactly as science lays them open to me."

"And you really believe that all the fine things you have promised will come to pass?"

"Aye as surely as that I uttered them."

"Well, I shall see, if I live long enough, but I have a misgiving in my own mind that there is more flattery than truth in the promises you have made. You may believe that all these things will come to pass, but if I was ever so inclined to place faith in them my husband would laugh me out of the notion."

"You will do wisely not to tell him what you have heard."

"He knows already," answered Mrs. Marlow, "for he is not so far off but every word you have uttered must have reached his ears. He has no faith in the predictions of your people, though he has so far humoured me as to yield because he thought I had a wish to hear you prophecy."

Marlow was now seen slowly directing his steps towards them, and the gipsy, turning away, plunged into a thicket close by and was seen no more.

"So," exclaimed the husband gaily as his wife took his arm, "we have a beautiful destiny before us Mary, if we are to believe half that yonder crazy woman has been telling you. We are to ride in our carriage, it seems and the children are to make a great figure in the world."

"She tells us so," answered Mrs. Marlow, "and I should have been inclined to place some confidence in her words but that I knew you would laugh at me for it."

"And very justly too," he replied, "for I consider it a weakness to rely on the predictions of an ignorant woman who knows no more of the craft than we do ourselves. How I ask you can she tell what is to happen to us?"

"I know not how she may have got her information," replied his wife, "but as she was right in one thing I see no reason why she should'nt be in others,"

"In what was she right?"

"Why she spoke of what you had been before the happy change in your conduct took place. She spoke truly enough there, and the wonder is how she came by her information if it was not by the art she possesses."

"I can tell you how it is most likely she got it," replied Marlow. "We have frequently spoken of our affairs, past as well as present during our walks and as these people are always lurking about in places where they are least expected, it is natural to suppose she has picked up enough to serve as a useful foundation for a future occasion. Thus prepared she accosted you just now and was able to utter a few startling facts that were sure to work upon your credulity."

"I am almost sorry to hear you say so," sighed Mr. Marlow.



"And why are you sorry, my dear Mary?"

"Because it puts to flight so many pleasant hopes that I had formed," he replied. "The vision may have been a deceptive one but it was very delightful for all that."

"Ah! you imagined ourselves rolling in wealth, and our children ranking themselves among the great ones of the land."

"I was certainly foolish enough to place some little faith in what the woman said," replied Mrs. Marlow.

"Yet I heard you tell her that you had no reliance in her words."

"That was because I knew you overheard everything that was said. I don't like to be laughed at, Frederick, though if the truth must be told, I really thought some part of the good fortune she predicted might come to pass."

"But you don't place any faith in her now, I hope?"

"Why do you hope any such thing?" she asked.

"Because there's nothing so bad to bear as disappointment, and I know if you make up your mind to get up high in the world as she would have you believe, you'll find out by and by, that she has told you nothing but a parcel of falsehoods. Ride in our carriage, indeed! I shall be very well satisfied if we are never worse off than we are at the present moment."

"So shall I," continued Mrs. Marlow; "and if my hopes were a little excited just now it was not on our own account, but for the sake of our children who, I think would prove themselves worthy of any situation, however high it might be."

"I have no doubt of that, my dear," answered her husband, "but I am also sure they will be well content to remain in the same station to which they at present belong. What greater happiness can they possibly know, even if they were the children of one of the first merchants in London?"

"That's very true," she replied, "and yet it's only natural that, as a parent, I should be anxious to see my children rise in the world. They endured much suffering when we were oppressed with misfortune, and it would be a consolation hereafter to see them in the enjoyment of wealth as a reward for the trouble they have gone through."

"For my own part," returned her husband, "I would much rather see them making their way honestly and slowly through the world. And I have no doubt that's what they will do, for they have been good and dutiful children, and of such are the better portions of society formed. They have been brought up without any high-flown expectations, and no wish have I to see them placed in a sphere to which they have no right to aspire. So you see, Mary, how widely different your opinions and mine are upon this subject."

"I don't see that we differ so very much," answered Mrs. Marlow. "Both of us are anxious for the welfare of our children, though we don't take exactly the same views of the matter. And in truth I have no desire to see them rich, unless, in their prosperity they conducted themselves worthily."

"Aye," exclaimed her husband, "now I see we are more likely to agree in our notions. Both are anxious for the welfare of those we love, and the chief difference now between us is, that you have a notion that there may be some truth in the nonsense that woman has been telling you."

"If I had such a notion you have reasoned me out of it," answered Mrs. Marlow. "We women, you know, are a little given to superstition; but I, for one, am not so much so that I am not to be convinced of an error."

"Then you think if this fortune teller were to accost you when I happened to be absent, she would not be able to impose upon you with any more of her foolish predictions?"

"I am sure she would not, Frederick, but what made you put that question to me?"

"For this reason," he replied; "I am about to leave you to-morrow, and Mrs. Edwards is to take my place for the remainder of the time you are to stay here. You know the high respect I entertain for her, yet, as you said just now, all women are by their nature superstitious, and I have reason to believe she is no exception to the general rule. You wonder, I dare say, Mary, what I'm driving at, so I'll at once confess that I am afraid this fortune-teller will again accost you, and if Mrs. Edwards should happen to know what passes, she might not only en-



deavour to convince you that there was high prosperity in store for us, but also fill the heads of the young folks with notions that could never be realized."

"Indeed you are wrong there," exclaimed the wife, "for even if Mrs. Edwards may be a little inclined to superstition, I am sure she would not wish to say anything that might make you displeased with her. And as for the young folks, she would rather curb their ambition than say a word that might afterwards do them an injury for life."

"Well, I don't say she would do it willingly," answered Marlow, "but sometimes things are said without thought, that do a great deal of mischief. Say not a word to her then about what this woman has said, and no harm can come of it."

Mrs. Marlow promised to be silent on the subject, and here their conversation was brought to a close by their arrival at the cottage where they were lodging. No more was said about the gipsy, and other matters having been introduced, the remainder of the evening was passed in talking of the many delightful excursions they had made during the week.

The next morning Marlow left for town, and when night came Mrs. Edwards made her appearance to pass the rest of the holiday with her friends. The good old lady had not had a day's pleasure for many a year past, so that the change was now all the more agreeable, and most heartily did she enter into all the views of Mrs. Marlow, whether it happened that she proposed a long stroll or a short one, whether they should stay at home all the morning and take some favourite walk in the afternoon. It was all the same to Mrs. Edwards, whatever proposition was made, so, as there was no difference of opinion the two families jogged on famously together, and the time passed as happily as could be.

After what her husband had said Mrs. Marlow was in continual apprehension lest they might meet with the fortune-teller in any of their walks. Luckily, however, no such encounter took place, and not a hint of the previous occurrence having been given, Mrs. Edwards was left in a happy state of ignorance upon that particular event. Thus day after day passed over to the satisfaction of the elder holiday makers, and the great de-

light of the younger ones, who were so much pleased with their country life that the only sorrow they felt was at the approaching termination of their visit to Richmond.

At length the day for their return home came, and with it a repetition of most things that had happened exactly a fortnight before. There was the luggage to be transferred to the steamboat, the same beautiful scenery to be seen and admired on both sides of the river, the same bridges to pass under, and the same piers to pass, though not crowded with the same people they had seen on the former occasion. On reaching the wharf where they were to land they were met by Marlow, who had asked leave of absence for an hour or two, to see his family safe home. A cab was speedily hired, the two females, the young folks, and part of the luggage were squeezed inside, and Marlow took his seat on the box by the side of the driver.

#### CHAPTER IV.

HONEST INDUSTRY MEETS WITH ITS REWARD.—A VISIT TO THE WORKHOUSE AND THE CONFESSIONS OF A DRUNKARD.

THE career of Marlow for the next four years was of so uniform a character that we have little that is interesting to relate of him. He was the same steady, industrious servant that we have seen him, and as his wages were more than sufficient for the maintenance of his family there was always something considerable left to add to the money which was accumulating in the Savings' Bank. His son Frank too was now in the warehouse with him, so that he had one less in family dependant on his earnings and was of course able to lay by a larger sum to increase the store which was intended for their support in the event of an unfortunate change taking place. Not that there was any reason to apprehend such an occurrence for Mr. Bellamy's business was rapidly increasing, and his regard for Marlow was no less than it had always been from the period when he had taken him a second time into his service.







John Bellamy, a son of the principal, was now introduced to the concern,—not as a partner, for he was only just turned twenty years of age,—but to perfect himself in business habits against the period when his father might think it prudent to give him a share in his flourishing concern. In temper and disposition he was all that could be desired; mild and conciliating in his manners towards all who were in the employ of his father, he became a general favourite with the men, and with none more than with Marlow, towards whom he had from the first manifested a particular regard. He would frequently visit at his house and generally of an evening when the business of the day was over, would converse with him and ask his advice upon matters that he did not care to trouble his father with. In short they were fast friends, and their regard was as strong as that which usually exists between a parent and his child.

“I don’t know Mr. Marlow whether I make myself troublesome to you,” he said one evening, “but somehow I prefer your society to that of anybody else, except my own father, and he approves of my making a friend of you because, he says you are an example worthy of my imitating.”

“Mr. Bellamy is very kind to think so well of me,” answered the other, “but I have known the time when he would have told you to shun me as you would the plague.”

“I have heard him speak of it,” replied the young man, “but you were then given to excessive drinking and he never expected that it was possible you could turn out the steady, industrious man that you now are. He is pleased with the change, and you should hear how he speaks in your praise when you are not near to hear him.”

“It’s pleasant to hear that, sir,” ex-Marlow, “and yet I don’t know that I deserve much praise for doing what is after all nothing more than my duty. If I was a fool once it didn’t follow that I was always to remain one, and I should have been something worse than a fool if I hadn’t made an alteration for the better when I saw my wife and family ready to perish from starvation through my own wilful neglect. I then took the trouble to reflect a little, and the conse-

quence was, that I made a solemn vow within myself never to taste again of intoxicating liquors.”

“And did you get employment as soon as you had reformed?”

“No,” he replied, “people were still afraid of my relapsing into the old way as soon as I had the means, so I only got a job now and then, and many a time have I had the bitter pain of seeing my wife and children go supperless to their miserable bed.”

“But I believe matters took a little turn when you took the pledge of abstinence?”

“Yes, that proved I was in earnest, and in the belief that I was sincere in my determination your father was kind enough to give me a trial. I have not deceived him, and in return have received from him all sorts of favours. There is now scarcely a happier fellow in existence though sometimes, upon looking back at the past, I reproach myself for ever having been such a madman as to have spent so much of my life in riotous dissipation.”

“And yet as the lesson has not been thrown away, I don’t see that you have much reason for self-reproach. Besides your example may be useful to others, and is for that reason my father encourages a friendship between us, since he says I am sure to benefit by the good counsel and advice that you have in your power to give.”

“But *you*, my dear young friend, I think hardly need a warning against the vice of intemperance.”

“I hold it in utter abhorrence,” answered young Bellamy, “and nothing I believe will ever make a drinker of me. My father, however, thinks there is nothing like good precepts and example, and he feels satisfied that I shall find both in you. He tells me, too, that you have been a careful, as well as industrious man, and that besides bringing up your family in respectability, you have contrived, by economy to lay by a considerable sum of money in the Savings’ Bank.”

“True, I have done so,” replied Marlow, “but it was nothing more than my duty, seeing that I have children to provide for after I’m gone. We teetotalers make it a rule never to be extravagant in anything, and I believe among the



whole body—and they are very numerous—you will not find many that spend all their earnings, let them be ever so small.”

“I’ve a great mind to take the pledge myself.”

“Ah, do, Mr. John!” exclaimed Marlow, earnestly, “it’s not that there’s any occasion for it, because I know you are temperate, but we want the example of people that stand high in the world, and then those that are beneath them would be sure to follow.”

“Well, I’ll speak to my father upon the subject,” returned the young man. “For I make it a rule never to do anything without first taking his advice. He will, I am sure, approve of my intention, and as soon as he has done so I will get you to introduce me to the society you belong to. If by doing so I prevail on others to follow my example I shall indeed feel most satisfied.”

“Believe me it must do good,” exclaimed Marlow; “it will give courage to the waverers when they see the son of the rich Mr. Bellamy is not ashamed to enlist himself in the cause of virtue and sobriety. Many would be willing enough to join us, but that they are afraid of being laughed at by those who can see no merit but in drinking till they have lowered themselves beneath the very beasts of the field. Such a one was a poor fellow that I know, who is now lying on a sick bed in the work-house belonging to this parish.”

“What is his name?”

“Thompson,” replied the other, “I was talking to him when he dropped down in the street through exhaustion, and then conveyed him to the poor-house, where he has remained ever since.”

“And what does he now think of the dreadful habit that has brought him to his present condition?”

“He regrets it bitterly,” answered Marlow, “and should he ever leave his present wretched asylum,—which I believe is not likely,—he would lead a very different life. But to-morrow I am going to see him, for your father never objects to my taking an hour for that purpose,—if you like I’ll take you with me that you may behold with your own eyes, the miserable condition to which excess has reduced him.”

“It is sad to look upon human frailty,”

exclaimed the younger Bellamy, “and yet my curiosity is somewhat excited in the present instance, and I will go with you to see this man. The lesson he teaches is a severe one; but an inveterate drunkard requires a terrible example before he wakes to a sense of the normity he is committing, and for the sake of that class of persons, I could wish the case of this man was more generally known.”

“I remember poor Thompson when he first came into your father’s employ,” exclaimed Marlow, “and a better-hearted or more steady man could not have been found. He was remarkable for his steadiness, was trusted, and I believe there was an intention of raising him to a higher situation when his evil genius appeared in the shape of a fellow workman who prevailed upon him to go to some of those concerts that are given at public houses. Being a tolerable good singer, Thompson wanted very little persuasion, and from that moment he became an altered man; the business was neglected, and some days he did not make his appearance in the warehouse at all. But that was not the worst of it, for he induced me and a poor fellow named John Ashman to follow his example, and in the end all three of us were discharged as incorrigible drunkards. You are aware, sir, how long I was out of employ, and what miseries I was obliged to endure?”

“Yes,” answered the young man, “I have heard my father, as well as yourself speak of it, and the punishment was indeed great.”

“Not more than I deserved, though, if it had not been that my innocent family had to suffer with me.”

“Well, never mind, Marlow,” exclaimed the other, “you paid the penalty of your folly, and, having thoroughly reformed your way of living, have since obtained the confidence of the very same employer who had previously dismissed you from his service on account of your intemperance. But you spoke just now of a man named Ashman, who I believe suffered more dreadfully than the rest from the excesses that he had given way to?”

“He died raving mad in Bedlam,” replied Marlow.

“And his madness I believe was



brought on in consequence of having killed his wife?"

"Aye," answered Marlow, "he murdered her, in a moment of drunkenness, with the bottle which had been the cause of all his wretchedness and crime. But melancholy as the occurrence was I believe it is likely to prove a valuable lesson to mankind, for as you are aware George Cruikshank has lately published a series of plates upon the subject, and so eager have people been to purchase them, that the supply was not equal to the demand. Then the subject has been dramatised at nearly every minor theatre in London, and from the crowds that go nightly to witness the performance there is reason to hope that the publication of those terrible facts will prove useful to those who go to witness them."

"And is it true," asked young Bellamy, "that his children became what they are represented in the last of the plates?"

"Yes," answered the other, "the girl, from leading the life of a beggar, took to the streets, and at length, perished miserably by her own hand. She died in the condemned cell of Newgate, whether she had gone to see her brother, who was there under sentence of death, for the murder of an old man whose house he had entered for the purpose of committing a robbery. So you see the intemperance of the father was visited by a punishment that fell not only upon himself but his whole family."

"And yet the story goes that he was at one time a steady man, and was happy in his home and family."

"Aye, as much so as I am at the present moment," replied Marlow, "I remember the time well when his house was the picture of order and neatness, and his wife and family so neat and trim in their attire that they were the admiration of all who saw them. But that, Mr. John, was before the introduction of the bottle, when the earnings of the father were spent in ministering to the comforts of those he held most dear. The change that afterwards took place, however, was most deplorable, for the moment that raw liquor was introduced into his house it was the last of poor John Ashman's happiness. His wages went to purchase spirits instead of the comforts he had been used to his wife

followed the fatal example he had set; frequent quarrels took place between them, and the sequel was what I have told you."

"And yet even now," observed the other, "how many men might be found who are thoughtlessly treading in the footsteps that led this unfortunate man to his ruin."

"There are too many I fear," replied Marlow, "but at the same time it must be remembered that the various Temperance Societies in England are actively engaged in combating against the powerful enemy that has caused such destruction. Slowly, but surely, they are advancing in the good cause, and it is to be hoped the time is not very far distant when intemperance will be nearly eradicated, and men live rationally on the hard earnings of their labour."

"When that is the case," said young Bellamy, "we may hope to see the workhouses occupied only by the few who are driven there by sheer misfortune."

"You are right, sir," answered the other; "they are now crowded to suffocation, and at least two thirds of the inmates have been compelled to seek refuge there entirely in consequence of having recklessly squandered away their wages in drink, instead of laying by a portion to support them when out of work. And, what is still worse than all, it is that very drink that, in nine cases out of ten, causes their dismissal, they are then turned upon the world with a character blasted and damaged, and as a last resource are compelled to seek a refuge in the poor-house, where they live upon the hard earnings of those who are taxed for their support. And if an example was wanted, where can we look for a more melancholy one than in poor Thompson, who, but for his fatal propensity for drink, might at this very time have been supporting himself honourably."

"Whereas he is now suffering from an illness that renders life a burthen to him."

"Aye, and a heavy one too, I should imagine," exclaimed Marlow, "for his sufferings seem to be most acute, and it is easy enough to see that his reflections on his past ill-spent life are a continual torture to him. He always had a



horror of the workhouse too, and it is a source of no little mortification to him that he now finds himself compelled to receive the assistance which he has ever been too proud to ask for."

"And from what you say there's no chance of his ever leaving it," observed the younger Bellamy.

"He'll never leave it alive," answered the other, "for though he don't appear to get much worse, it seems from the doctor's statement, that nothing can ever restore a constitution that has been so shattered and shaken as his has been. You will, however, see him to-morrow, and witness the frightful ravages of intemperance upon a once hearty man. I shall visit him on my return from breakfast, and will meet you at the gate a few minutes after nine."

This was agreed upon, and as it was now past the time for leaving off business, Marlow went round the premises to see that everything was right and secure, and his duty having been performed he hastened home to enjoy his evening's meal after a toilsome day. He there found Tom Sweeting, whose situation he had taken when he was made one of the clerks in the establishment, and from the countenance of the young man he saw that he was the bearer of good news. Nor was he kept long in suspense, for after a hearty shake of the hand Sweeting at once dashed off into the business that had brought him there:—

"Marlow, my boy," he exclaimed, "I'm glad to be the first to congratulate you upon something good that's going to turn up. I'm going to leave the governor, and——"

"Do you call that good news?" interrupted the other.

"Stop a minute and hear me out before you form an opinion," exclaimed Tom. "Mr. Bellamy and I don't part through any quarrel, but because I've got a better situation in one of the government offices. Indeed, he was the principal means of getting me appointed to it, so that proves my boy, that he has not a very bad opinion of me."

"I'm glad to hear it, Tom," returned the other; "but you began by congratulating *me*, and for the life of me I can't see what for, except it be that I am one of the happiest fellows in the world."

"You haven't heard me out yet, old fellow," replied Sweeting. "I've not been congratulating you for nothing, I can tell you, and so you'll say when I've finished."

"Then pray go on, for I'm all impatience."

"Well then, what say you to taking my place in Mr. Bellamy's counting house with a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds a year? That will do, won't it my boy?"

"What do you mean, Tom?" asked the other, with surprise.

"Exactly what I say," he replied. "Mr. Bellamy can't do without a clerk in my place, and he has fixed upon you to succeed me."

"Impossible!"

"You'll find it true though, for all that. He came to me this afternoon, and asked me if I thought you knew anything about book-keeping, and I told him I was sure you did."

"And you were right there," exclaimed Marlow, "I was always very fond of it when at school, and used to have a good deal of praise for the progress I made in it. But I've been told a good many improvements have been made in it, and I'm afraid I should be terribly awkward as a clerk."

"Oh, you would only be at a loss at first," answered Sweeting. "Besides, you are quick enough at most things, and as you won't be wanted in your own situation for a week to come, I can in the meantime put you in the way how book-keeping is managed at the present time. It's easy enough, and by that time you will understand as much of it as I do."

"But are you quite sure Mr. Bellamy intends to put me into his counting-house?"

"I have his own words for it, my dear fellow, and I don't know that there can be any mistake about that."

"Did he say why he made choice of me?"

"Yes; he said he was much pleased with your steadiness and attention to business, and that as your present situation is a very heavy one, he thought it nothing more than fair to give you one that would be much lighter and at the same time better paid for."

"How kind of him to be sure!" ex-



elaimed Mrs. Marlow, who had been a delighted listener to this conversation.

"Aye, my dear madam," said Tom Sweeting, "but I have a notion you'll not find his kindness end there. He is still determined to reward your husband for his attention to business, and from what he said I shouldn't be at all surprised if one of these days he makes Marlow a junior partner in the concern."

"A partner!" gasped Mrs. Marlow in astonishment.

"Why not?" demanded Tom; "the governor's worked hard in his time and ought to rest himself now, and who would make a better partner than the man who as a servant has shown so much zeal to improve the concern? But mind, I don't tell you that such will be the case; only, from what fell, I think there's more unlikely things to happen."

"Well, I'll not look forward to anything," exclaimed Marlow; "but I suppose you are quite certain there's no mistake about his taking me into the counting house?"

"No, that I'm sure there is not; for when I told him you were well enough able to undertake the situation, he said plainly enough that you should be my successor. So now you know as much as I do about it, my boy, and if you like to call on me of an evening I'll put you in the way of keeping the books to his satisfaction. Why in less than a week's time you'll have been instructed in all the mysteries of the craft."

This having been arranged between them, the good-natured Tom Sweeting took his leave, and Marlow, more happy than ever, sat down to supper with his wife and Mrs. Edwards, both of whom strove against each other as to who should be warmest in their praises of Mr. Bellamy. The meal over, Marlow and his wife retired to rest, grateful for the benefits that had been heaped upon them, and resolved by every means in their power to deserve their good fortune.

The next morning after breakfast. Marlow directed his foot-steps towards the work-house, before the gates of which it had been agreed he was to meet his young master. True to their appointment, both were upon the spot at the same moment, and having rung the bell, they were admitted by the porter

into the archway in which his lodge was situated. From thence they made their way towards what was called the hall, where having made their business known to a person who was in attendance, they were conducted to the infirmary, where they found Thompson seated in a chair, but so weak that he was obliged to be supported with pillows. The poor fellow was not aware of their presence till roused by the well-known voice of his friend Marlow, when holding out a feverish and skeleton-like hand, his eyes glistened with joy at seeing that even in his direst misfortune he was not yet quite forgotten. He, however, looked suspiciously at the young man, and in a whisper to Marlow, inquired who he was.

"Ah!" exclaimed the other, "I don't wonder that you have forgotten him, my dear fellow, for he was quite a youngster, and was more at school than at home when you was in the service of his father."

"Is this a son of Mr. Bellamy?"

"To be sure it is," answered Marlow; "he heard that you were here, and how ill you have been, so he asked to come with me when I paid my next visit, and here he is."

"It's kind if he came out of compassion," murmured the invalid, "but cruel if he only wanted to see me from curiosity."

"Believe me I had no such thought," exclaimed the young man. "I have heard something of your melancholy story, and was told also that you are ill, but —"

"Say no more," interrupted Thompson, "I can believe that you come here in kindness, though nothing that you or anybody else can do will serve to smooth the few last hours of a wretched man, who is suffering heavily for a mis-spent life. I have been abandoned by all but Marlow, and he I suppose will remain true to the last hour."

"I will assist you if it be in my power."

"It is in your power, young man," exclaimed Thompson. "Remove me from this hateful workhouse; let me not die here, for I loathe and abhor the place."

"Your wish shall be complied with," answered John Bellamy. "I will take a lodging for you in some pleasant



place, and perhaps you may recover to make amends for any faults of which you may have been guilty."

"Ah, I thank you for your offer, and gladly accept it," exclaimed Thompson, earnestly. "I shall not die then in this pauper's abode, but shall once more breathe the fresh air of heaven. Yet think not that I shall ever recover, young gentleman; I may linger on all the longer for the blessed change perhaps, but my strength is gone for ever. It is not, however, for me to complain—my suffering has been brought on by myself, and seldom is it that I murmur at the sharp anguish I endure."

"You were led away by others, perhaps?"

"I was, but what excuse is that? I had sense given to me as other men have, and abused it—drank madly, to excess—neglected your father's business, and, when my vicious course could no longer be endured, was dismissed from his employ. From that time I dare not say what I have been, or what I have done, except that night and day have been passed in drinking, and for weeks together I have known no other bed than the streets, or some skittle ground, in which some landlord—a former acquaintance perhaps—has allowed me to sleep like a wild beast."

"And how did you obtain food to support yourself?" demanded young Bellamy.

"Food!" he exclaimed; "I wanted none so long as I could get liquor to drink, my bowels seemed to have consumed by the burning fluid that I was continually pouring into them. I never thought of eating, so nature gradually gave way, and I was hurrying unconsciously to the grave, when chance threw me in the way of my old acquaintance, Fred Marlow. He, I dare say, remembers the day well; I had had nothing to drink—nothing to excite me, for the last four and twenty hours; I felt sinking, and demanded money of him to procure gin; he refused me, and soon afterwards my little remaining strength failed, and I fell, half dead, into his arms. From that moment I was unconscious till I found myself in this place."

"It was my only alternative," said Marlow, "for I had no accommodation for you in my own house, and was there-

fore obliged to convey you to the first place where you would be attended to. From that time I have frequently come here to see how you are, and to take care that you have whatever may be considered necessary by the doctor."

"You have indeed been most kind," exclaimed the invalid, "and I acknowledge myself to be unworthy the attention you have bestowed upon me. Yet to see the face of an old friend now and then is a consolation, and makes even this place bearable, though everything I see and hear is constantly reminding me that I am in the workhouse."

"But with care you may get your health again," observed young Bellamy, and in that case, if your habit of drinking has been cured, my father may take you into his employ again as he has done with your friend Marlow."

"I shall never be better than I am now," answered Thompson with a heavy sigh, "it has been destroyed by my mad indulgence of that fatal poison that has destroyed so many others, and, though I may linger on for some time to come, it will be to see myself slowly sinking into the grave that my own hands have dug."

"Are you always so melancholy," asked Marlow.

"There is nothing to make me otherwise," answered the unhappy man. "If I look back upon the past I have everything to regret and if my mind wanders into the maze of the future I see nothing there but misery and despair. There is nothing to cheer or console me, and my heart sickens when I think of the wilful blindness with which I hurried headlong into ruin."

"'Tis well to think seriously of one's misdeeds," exclaimed Marlow, "but no man should despair of pardon when once he has brought his mind to look back upon the past with regret. You are now suffering for the follies you have committed, and it is only right that you should endure the punishment with resignation."

"So I do," answered Thompson. "I acknowledge that I deserve it all, but still I keep lingering on, and what is worse than all I have no hope that sins like mine can be pardoned."

"If your repentance is sincere it will meet the favour it deserves," exclaimed



his friend. "But this subject makes you melancholy I see, so let us talk of something else that I think you will be glad of. I am getting on famously my boy, through the kindness of Mr. Bellamy, and in the course of another week shall be raised to a place in the counting-house."

"Ah, you deserve it then. You have been steady and attentive to the business, or this good fortune would not have happened."

"I have endeavoured to discharge my duties faithfully, and my master takes a pleasure in rewarding me for it."

"Well," exclaimed Thompson, holding out his feverish and almost fleshless hand, "I give you joy of your good fortune, my dear fellow. A faithful servant deserves encouragement, and Mr. Bellamy will never have reason to repent the favour he has shown you. It's the way to make people attentive to their duties, though few employers seem to think so. *You* may rise yet higher in the world, whilst it will be my fate to pass the rest of my life as a miserable pauper."

"Not so," answered Marlow, "for you have heard what this young gentleman has said, and my experience tells me that he never breaks a promise. You will be removed from here to some more pleasant abode, and, if Mr. Bellamy allows it, I will give a part of my weekly money towards procuring for you the comforts that you require."

"Indeed Marlow," exclaimed young Bellamy, "I shall not suffer anybody to interfere in a plan that I have made up my mind to. Your friend shall be the object of my care so long as I see that he is deserving of kindness, and judging from what I have just heard, there is every reason to believe that my good intentions will not be thrown away."

"You mean, I suppose, sir," observed Thompson, "that I am not likely to give way to my old passion for drink."

"That was indeed what I thought," he replied.

"Promises from my lips will not, I dare say, be heeded," answered the invalid; "but at any rate, time will prove that what I have suffered has not been thrown away. You are about to release me from the purgatory I suffer in this place, and there is but one way

to show my gratitude; I will prove it by changing my mode of life, though the reformation comes somewhat late. I have been a slave to my own unbridled passions, but have at length learned how to curb them."

"Then like me," observed Marlow, "you will soon wonder how you could ever have yielded to temptation. Unfortunately, a love of society leads to tippling; the habit daily grows upon us, and at last we can find ourselves comfortable nowhere but in the crowded room of a public house. There we meet with men that we ought to shun, but over a glass their vices are overlooked, and at length we so far forget the danger of contamination as to imitate examples that at a former period we should have shrunk from with horror. But there is no occasion to say anything more about it, to a man that sees his folly, so we'll leave you now, old friend, and the next time we give you a call I hope it will be in some place where you will find yourself more comfortable."

Mr. John Bellamy promised that no time should be lost in looking out for a lodging where Thompson would have all the attention he required, and having given him this assurance, he and Marlow took their leave, as it was now time to return to business. After passing through the gloomy looking portals of the workhouse, they pursued their way for some little distance, in thoughtful silence. This was, however, at length broken by an exclamation from Marlow—

"That's a melancholy picture, sir, we have just seen," he said. "The poor fellow sees the errors he has committed, but how much better it would have been if his eyes had been opened while there was a chance of being able to work for his own living."

"Aye, 'twas a sad scene indeed," answered the young man, "and yet after all there is a consolation in seeing that he sincerely regrets the past. If his faults have been great, he has suffered for them in proportion, and it will now afford me the highest gratification to provide for his future comfort."

"But do you think your father will approve of what you are going to do?"

"I am sure he will," answered the young man, "for nothing ever affords







him greater pleasure than to assist those who are unfortunate."

"Aye, but he may argue that Thompson's misfortunes were brought on by his own folly, and that therefore he deserves not the compassion of his fellow creatures."

"Indeed, Mr. Marlow, you don't know my father's disposition yet, if that's your opinion of him," exclaimed the other. "It is long before his anger against people is excited, but when he sees that they are really sorry for the faults they have committed there is no man more ready to pardon them. In short, I feel so certain that he will approve of my project that I could almost venture to carry it into effect without consulting him."

By this time they had reached the warehouse, and they parted; young Mr. Bellamy to seek for his father and acquaint him with what had occurred, and the other to perform the duties for which he was engaged. Marlow thought of the scene he had witnessed, and his heart leaped with joy at the certainty that poor Thompson's trials were drawing so near a close.

## CHAPTER V.

FREDERICK MARLOW MAKES ANOTHER ADVANCE AND BECOMES A CONFIDENTIAL CLERK.—A LOVE AFFAIR WHICH WILL BE REVEALED TO THOSE WHO PERUSE THIS CHAPTER.

MR. BELLAMY lost no time in informing Marlow that it was his intention to take him into his counting-house, and at the expiration of a week we behold him at the desk, well able to perform his duties there, through the promised assistance that he had received from his friend Tom Sweeting. A week or two were sufficient to make him a complete master of the new duties he had to perform, and to his own joy he saw that he gave entire satisfaction to his employer. Mr. Bellamy indeed made him his confidant in all matters of business, frequently invited him to his country-house, and behaved to him in every respect as to a friend whom he valued and respected.

Young Bellamy was also a frequent

visitor at Marlow's home, where he was received as an honoured guest; though serious apprehensions at length began to arise that he was attracted there chiefly by the beauty and fascinations of Susan Marlow, who had recently left school, an exceedingly handsome and well-educated girl. Mr. John's attentions to her were so marked that they could not escape observation, and great was the fear of Marlow lest these visits should give offence to his employer, and thus lead to a rupture just at the time when his prospects were most bright and flattering. To forbid the young man his house was impossible, neither could he question him as to his motives, and, perplexed with the difficulties that had so unexpectedly sprung up, he was wondering how he should act under such circumstances, when one evening just as he was leaving business, a message was brought from Mr. Bellamy requesting to see him in his private apartment. This startled Marlow, who at once guessed that an angry remonstrance was about to follow, but as there was no alternative he at once obeyed the order, and proceeded to the room where Mr. Bellamy was waiting for him. Had he been a criminal he could not have been in a state of greater perturbation, nor did his anxiety entirely leave him, even when he saw that there were no signs of anger in the placid countenance of his employer.

"I don't know, Mr. Marlow," began the merchant, "whether you have spoken to my son upon the subject, but I find he is frequently at your house, and should like to know whether he goes there from friendship to yourself or any other branch of your family. Let us be honest and straight-forward in our dealings with each other, and there is no doubt we shall come to an amicable understanding upon a subject in which there should be no disguise."

"There shall be none on my part, I assure you, sir," answered Marlow, "and you will believe me I hope, when I declare that I have reason to suppose your son's visits are purely out of friendship to myself."

"You think then he is not attracted there by your daughter, who I understand is exceedingly handsome?"

"I can hardly think it possible, sir,"



he replied, "for though I am vain enough to admit that the girl is tolerably good looking, I think your son has too much good sense to fix his affections upon one who is in every respect so far beneath him."

"As for that, Mr. Marlow," replied the other, "I am not one of those parents who would blight the happiness of their children through any fancied distinction of that kind. I love my son, and would see him settled happily whether it might be with your daughter or any other young lady who might be able to boast of an older pedigree. So you understand me; I am not angry with John for being your visitor so often, but I like openness and candour, and expect that he will not form a matrimonial alliance without first consulting me upon the subject."

"You don't think he would be guilty of such a thing I hope, sir."

"In my own mind I feel pretty confident that he would not," answered Mr. Bellamy, "but young men now a-days think it unnecessary to seek the counsel and advice of their elders."

"But Mr. John entertains the highest respect for his father."

"Aye, aye," returned the other, "so far I have nothing to complain of, and I dare say he is as dutiful as most young men are. But love makes singular transformations in the human heart, and all my fear is that he may so far forget himself as to marry first and ask my consent afterwards."

"Then you really think, sir," asked Marlow, "that he has formed an attachment for my daughter?"

"Nay," he whispered, "it is a mere suspicion, and perhaps after all, there may be no real foundation for it. My son has seldom given me any cause for uneasiness, and perhaps never may, but it is as well to be on one's guard, and I should therefore wish you to learn from your daughter whether this young man has ever spoken to her about love."

"And if he has, am I to forbid him my house?"

"By no means," answered Mr. Bellamy. "In your society I can trust him with safety, but I should like to know exactly the purpose that takes him so frequently to your house."

"May I be allowed to tell him what you have said to me?"

"There can be no harm in your doing so, if there should appear to be good grounds for believing that my suspicions are correct."

"And in that case, I am to forbid his addresses to my Susan?"

"Do nothing in haste, or we may afterwards have reason to repent it," answered Mr. Bellamy. "Besides, I have no objection to a marriage between them, if their attachment for each other is a sincere one, for I have heard most favourable reports of your daughter, and what can John do better, than marry a girl of virtuous and exemplary character."

"But my Susan will be portionless,—or nearly so."

"What of that, if her husband is wealthy?" demanded Mr. Bellamy, "I am not anxious to see my son marry merely for the sake of a fortune, when he will have one of his own, and if there is a strong attachment between the parties, I know not that I should throw any obstacles in the way."

"Wouldn't the world consider it a disgrace, if your son was to marry the daughter of his father's clerk?"

"The daughter of an honest man, my dear fellow, is a match for any one," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy. "At any rate, I for one should not think it a disgrace, and as for any other persons, it matters very little what they might say upon the subject. Besides, I have a project in my head Marlow, that, as it must make you equal with myself, would silence the ill-natured remarks you speak of."

"I confess I understand not your meaning, sir."

"Perhaps not," he replied, "nor did I wish to explain myself just now. I have however, said too much to keep the secret any longer, so the truth of it is this:—I wish to take a less active part in the business, than I have hitherto done, and therefore intend to take a partner, upon whose integrity and industry I can rely."

"And who will be able to bring a large sum of money into the concern?"

"No, that is the last of my thoughts, Marlow," he replied. "I am satisfied with the fortune I have already made, and as my business is in a very flourishing con-



dition, I have no desire to increase my capital. An honest, trustworthy partner is all I require, and after maturely considering the subject, I have determined upon taking you into the firm."

"Me!" exclaimed Marlow with the utmost astonishment.

"Even so, my dear fellow," answered the other. "I know you to be all that I could most desire, and at Christmas next, if you have no objection you will be received as a partner in this concern."

"Oh sir, how can I ever express my gratitude?"

"I want no thanks, Mr. Marlow," for the reward has been well earned by your constant attention to my interest. A steady man will prove invaluable to me, and where could I have made a better choice than in selecting you."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Marlow, "that the once idle, dissolute drunkard will be thus raised to a high station in society?"

"My dear friend," answered Mr. Bellamy, "it shows that it is never too late to mend, and that a determination to do better in future will eventually obliterate all remembrance of the past. When first I took you back into my employ I confess it was with no little fear that, with fresh means at your command you would break out and become as reckless as you had previously been. Experience however, has proved the contrary and I have seen with no little satisfaction that my efforts to snatch you from ruin have been most successful."

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Marlow, "what a fortunate moment was it for me when I took the pledge."

"It was indeed," replied the other, "for unless you had done so, I should have had no confidence in your promises, and your solicitations for another trial would have been of no avail. You have kept your word faithfully, and to mark my approbation of your conduct I have encouraged you by advancing your situation in my house whenever an opportunity presented itself. As my confidential clerk you have proved yourself worthy of the trust, and now, as the highest reward I can bestow, it is my intention to give you a share in my business."

"And your son," exclaimed Marlow;

"may I be permitted to ask when he is coming into the firm?"

"As soon as he is of age," replied the father, "or in other words, about six months after you enter it. He will then take my place, and I shall retire leaving him and you to carry on the business, with as much honour, I hope, as I have done. John will then be his own master, and if he still loves your daughter, why he will marry her, and that too with the proud satisfaction of knowing that he weds one who is fully equal to himself."

"Then you have no objection to an alliance between our families?" asked Marlow.

"Objection, my dear fellow!" exclaimed the other, "what objection can I possibly have to become the father-in-law of a virtuous and excellent girl? You have brought her up in a most exemplary manner, and there is every reason to believe that she will add honour to those she is allied to. But, understand me, Marlow, I do not wish my son to know that I approve his selection, till it appears that his affection is so entirely fixed upon her that there is no chance of its being transferred to any other person."

"I will remember what you have said," answered the other, "but I suppose you wish me to let him know that I suspect the feelings with which he regards my daughter?"

"Certainly I do," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy. "There must be no secrecy,—no underhand business, but all must be clear and open as the noon-day. I would have him learn that he has no opposition to expect from me, if I see his happiness is likely to be secured, but that I shall certainly interfere if I have reason to apprehend that his affections are not fixed upon a firm basis."

"That is a point," said Marlow, "upon which I shall be as anxious as yourself, though from what I have seen of your son I believe there is not a dishonourable feeling belonging to him."

"Nor would I own him for a child of mine if I thought he could be guilty of an act that he would afterwards have reason to blush for," replied Mr. Bellamy. "So far I have had no cause to be dissatisfied, but young men require a watchful eye over them, and I have no



right to presume that my son has a smaller share of faults than other young men who have had but little experience in the world. You will, however, soon ascertain the real motives that take him so often to your house, and, though I don't want you to be a spy upon his actions, I should like to know as soon as possible whether he has formed an attachment to your daughter."

"I shall soon know how that is, sir," answered Marlow, "and will not fail to let you know at the earliest convenience. From Susan I shall soon learn whether any proposal has been made, though I scarcely think that possible, as her mother would have known of it as soon as the offer was made."

"Has Mrs. Marlow no suspicion about these frequent visits of my son to your house?"

"Most assuredly not," replied Marlow, "she is proud of her guest, and believes he visits us merely from a general attachment to the family."

"Have you observed whether the young folks seem to have formed a strong attachment for each other?"

"I have not noticed anything of the kind at present."

"Then there may be no foundation for my suspicions after all," said Mr. Bellamy, "and I therefore leave you to speak to my son or not, as you may feel inclined. You will remember what I have said about your being taken into the firm at Christmas, so that if a marriage chance to take place there will be no inequality between the young folks."

They both rose from their seats, and Marlow after again expressing his obligations for the favours that had been heaped upon him, took his leave with a heart overflowing with gratitude. On his way home his thoughts were naturally turned towards recent events, and the fresh instance of kindness that he had just received from his benefactor. When he arrived within doors his wife saw at a glance that he was the bearer of more good news, and in answer to her eager questions he explained in as few words as possible the important change that was about to take place in their position in life. Surprised as she certainly was, Mrs. Marlow contrived to restrain her joy within bounds, and having heard her husband to an end, she inquired if he

knew what motive Mr. Bellamy had for bestowing this last important favour on them.

"I believe he has more motives than one for it," he replied, "but it matters little why he takes me into partnership, since I know he considers me deserving of all his confidence. I should tell you however, that he is anxious to reward what he calls my honest services, and having a wish to release himself from the cares of business has chosen me to take a share of it with his son, who is to be at the head of the firm as soon as he reaches the age of twenty one."

"Which will be about next Midsummer I think."

"Thereabouts I believe," answered her husband, "and that will be just six months after I enter the concern. Mr. John will then be his own master, and most likely won't be long before he takes to himself a wife, and then —"

"A wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, with surprise."

"Aye," answered her husband, "have you never heard him speak upon that subject?"

"Never."

"And I suppose you can't guess who he's likely to marry?"

"I've never so much as thought about it," she replied.

"Indeed?" exclaimed Marlow; "then I suppose you have not observed whether he has been particular in his attention to our daughter?"

"Good heavens, husband! what ever are you talking about?" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow with surprise, "Mr. John Bellamy pay his addresses to our Susan! Do you think it likely he would think of such a thing when there's so many young ladies of higher rank that would think it an honour to be his wife?"

"Well, my dear," he replied, smilingly, "I don't know that the match would be so very unequal after all. If we have a share in the business we shall rise to be on an equality with him, and as his father is not anxious about his having a fortune with his wife I don't see that there's anything so very improbable in their making a match of it."

"You don't say so!" gasped forth Mrs. Marlow.

"But I do say so," he replied, "and what's more, Mr. Bellamy is pretty



much of the same opinion, for we had a long conversation upon the subject a little while ago, and from it I learn that he suspects the motive of his son's frequent visits to our house, though I myself never had the least suspicion about the matter till he mentioned it."

"And wasn't he very angry about it, Frederick?"

"Not at all; he spoke in very flattering terms of Susan, who he says is reported to be a very virtuous and well conducted young person. In short he has no objection to their marriage, but expects Mr. John to ask his advice upon the matter, and won't be best pleased if he sees any underhanded goings on."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "I don't know how he can have found out so much, when I, who am always present when he is here, never so much as suspected that he came to see us for anything else than friendship for you."

"And yet a very little consideration might have convinced us that he must have had some *other* motive," answered her husband. "You see it struck Mr. Bellamy at once, and though he was never present to see the young folks, he sees through it all as clearly as if he had been consulted. But he is a clear headed man of the world, Mary, and when he found how often his son comes here to see us, the thought struck him there must be some female in the way, and that female he believes is no other than our daughter Susan."

"And yet the sly young puss has never said a word to me about it!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow.

"There may be a very sufficient reason for that," answered her husband. "Young Mr. Bellamy may not have mentioned the subject to her yet, and in that case we can't expect the girl to make any disclosures."

"And do you think there is any truth in Mr. John being in love with our daughter?" asked Mrs. Marlow.

"I know nothing more than what was suggested to me by his father just before I came away," replied her husband. "He spoke of his son's frequent visits here, and, taking care to let me understand that he had no wish to throw any impediment in the way of their marriage, he asked me to give an eye to

the young folks, and let him know as soon as there was sufficient reason for believing that they are attached to each other. He told me also, that I was to be taken into partnership at Christmas, and that as soon as his son is of age he intends to retire altogether from business, and to let him have his share."

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "did ever people get on as fast as we have done ever since we took the pledge?"

"Ah!" replied her husband, "that was indeed the commencement of our good fortune, for from that day we have had a continued succession of luck. Plenty has smiled upon our board, and content made happy every hour of our lives."

"And do you know, Frederick," she exclaimed, "though you laughed at it at the time, I have often thought of the gipsy woman you and I met in Richmond Park when we were making holiday there. You wouldn't believe a word she said, yet how much of it has come true."

"I almost forget what it was she said."

"Then I'll remind you of what it was: in the first place she told me we should live to see that great good fortune is in store for us; that you and I would ride in our own carriage; that our children will prove a pride and comfort to us—our daughter becoming the wife of a wealthy man, and our son to rise by his own merit to honour and renown."

"Do you still believe in her predictions?" asked Marlow.

"Why shouldn't I?" she exclaimed, "the first part has come true already, and so will all the rest if present appearances do not deceive me. Fortune favours us, my dear Frederick, and we shall yet rise in the world in spite of the clouds and darkness that beset us at one period."

"Aye," replied Marlow, "matters indeed looked gloomy enough at one period, but then that was all through my own fault, and when I changed my course of life things began to look better and better every day, till at length we found ourselves independent of all the world except my master."

"And he is to be master only for a



very little longer," observed Mrs. Marlow. "Only think, my dear, of being one of the heads of the concern in which but a short time since you were only a servant."

"It is indeed most gratifying," he replied, "and especially since I have the consciousness of knowing that the many acts of kindness bestowed upon me by Mr. Bellamy were performed by him out of friendship towards the man that he thought was deserving of it. It will act, too, I hope, as an example to others, and incite them to honesty and sobriety, in order that, like me, they may obtain the regard and confidence of their employers. But I forgot to ask you, Mary, if our young master has been here to-night?"

"Not yet," she replied, "but I dare say we shall have him presently, for it's very seldom, as you know, a night passes without his calling in upon us."

"I hope he will be here presently," observed her husband.

"And why do you so particularly wish to see him to-night?"

"Because I want to talk to him upon the subject that his father is so anxious about," answered Marlow.

"Don't you think that Mr. John will be angry if you question him before he is inclined to speak upon the matter?"

"If he possesses only a small share of the sense, I give him credit for, he'll not feel offended," replied her husband. "It is right and proper that I should be consulted before this love affair goes any further."

"But we don't know yet that he comes to see our Susan."

"We may pretty well guess at it though," answered Marlow, "for a young man like John Bellamy is not likely to walk here every evening for the mere purpose of seeing you and I. No, no, there is something more attractive, and when next we meet I shall be able to get to the bottom of the mystery."

"And suppose it should appear that he is fond of the girl, would you forbid him the house?"

"Forbid John Bellamy my house!" he exclaimed with surprise. "Do you suppose I could easily give up the friendship of a young man that I so much esteem?"

"I thought perhaps his father might expect it."

"On the contrary," answered Marlow, "his father has no objection to his visiting here, nor even his paying his addresses to our daughter. But he expects to be consulted in an affair of such importance, and then, if he finds that the young folks are really attached to each other he'll offer no obstacle to their union. He himself told me as much just now."

"And Mr. John is to take his father's share of the business?"

"Yes, as soon as he is of age, he will, and then my dear Mary, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your husband the partner of as worthy a young man as ever lived. The business too at this time is in a more flourishing condition than ever it was since I have known any thing about it, so that we have a fair prospect of making a fortune."

"And riding in our carriage as the gipsy foretold."

"I see you are still inclined to believe that the woman must have been gifted with the power of prophecy," exclaimed her husband, "but for my own part I look upon the whole tribe as so many imposters. In this instance she may have chanced to make a pretty good guess, and I have heard it remarked that they always foretell great good fortune to those who consult them in order to obtain more credit."

"Be that as it may," answered Mr. Marlow, "there's not much harm can come from my believing her in this instance."

"I don't know that there may be much mischief," he replied, "but superstition ought always to be suppressed rather than encouraged. With women, however, I'm afraid it will be a long time before they see the folly of placing their reliance on those imposters, for they are naturally credulous, and their faith is not easily shaken by argument."

"A knock was now heard at the street door, and as there was no doubt that the visitor was Mr. John Bellamy, the wife left the room in order that an opportunity should be given for the private conversation that was to follow. In a few minutes the young gentleman made his appearance, shook hands with Marlow and then, after vainly gazing round



the room, inquired if Susan was at home.

"She is, was the brief reply to his question.

"May I not be permitted to see her, this evening?"

"I'm afraid not."

"She is ill then!" exclaimed John with alarm.

"Indeed my dear sir, she was never better in her life," replied her father.

"What am I to understand from this," demanded young Bellamy with amazement. "Till now I have always been permitted the pleasure of conversing with her, and you have seemed to approve of my visits to your house."

"Don't think I intend any unkindness my dear young friend," answered Marlow, "for the truth is I am always pleased to receive you in our humble home. The truth is, however, that I have had a conversation with your father to day, and he suspects that an attachment has grown up between you and my daughter."

"And would he object to it, were I to confess that he is right in his conjecture?" inquired the young man.

"I believe not," answered Marlow, "but like all other parents he expects to be consulted in an affair that so deeply concerns your future happiness."

"My father ought to have known me better than to suppose that I would deceive him," exclaimed John Bellamy. "I have ever made him my confidant, and should have done so on the present occasion, as soon as I knew whether my addresses had been accepted."

"Have you mentioned the subject to Susan yet?"

"I have spoken with sufficient plainness for her to understand that she is mistress of my heart."

"Yet she has not mentioned it to either her mother or myself!"

"You must not be angry with her for that," exclaimed he, "for the truth is, I asked her to keep the secret till I had ascertained whether the proposal I had to make would be agreeable to my father."

"He has no objection whatever to make," answered Marlow, "but seems on the contrary, extremely pleased at the prospect of your marriage."

"How did he know anything about it?"

"I believe he guessed it from the fact of your being so frequently at my house," answered Marlow. "Of course your father knew that I had a daughter, and as some one has told him that she is tolerably good-looking, it was natural enough for him to suppose that you were smitten with her. Be that as it may, however, he knows all about it, and it now only remains for you to open your mind to him freely about it."

"You think I have no wrath to expect from him?"

"Certainly not," answered Marlow. "You will find him disposed to hear all you have to say with kindness, and to counsel you as to what will be the best plan for you to adopt."

"He didn't say then that he had any objection to my marrying your daughter?"

"You will be pleased to hear that he spoke of it with a great deal of satisfaction."

"Then he makes no objection to her being without fortune?"

"That circumstance seems to have no weight with him," replied Marlow. "In short he said you would be wealthy enough to make up any deficiency in that respect, and as for the difference in our stations of life, that is to be got over by giving me a share in his business."

"I understand what you mean," exclaimed young Bellamy, warmly shaking his friend's hand. "My father has several times of late hinted to me that he should take you into partnership with him, and now I suppose that he will do so without delay."

"He tells me that it will be at Christmas," answered the other, "and on the day you come of age he intends to retire altogether from business, and put you in his place."

"That's just what I expected from expressions that have fallen from him of late," said the young man. "He has long wished to enjoy the pleasures of a country life, and will retire, I hope, in the full confidence that you and I will never do anything to bring disgrace on a house that has for so many years been looked up to with respect. You, at any rate, he knows may be relied on."

"And he is equally well satisfied with



# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





his son," answered Marlow, "or he would not trust so young a man with a concern which requires the utmost care and attention. And most gratifying is it to both of us, that we have done nothing to forfeit the good opinion of a man, whose honour as a London merchant has never been doubted."

"This news that you have been telling me of, is delightful," exclaimed the younger Bellamy, rubbing his hands with glee. "A few months will place me at the highest point of my ambition, and when that is the case, my first wish will be to make Susan the sharer of my fortune."

"But not, I hope, without first consulting your father upon the subject?" cried the other.

"Ah, no," he replied; "you may depend upon it my good friend, I will never do anything to forfeit the regard of one to whom I owe so much. To-morrow I will take an opportunity of speaking to him in private, when I will freely open my whole heart to him, and no doubt, he will at once yield his consent to my marriage."

"Suppose he should forbid the union?"

"Oh, I am certain he values my happiness too highly to destroy it, by refusing his consent."

"But he may think you may forget your first passion, and seek some other lady of fortune."

"Do you really believe such a thought may enter his mind?"

"My dear young friend," exclaimed Marlow, "I think it is exceedingly improbable, but I would guard you against making too sure when there is the possibility of a disappointment. Your father has ever been indulgent to his only child, and will, no doubt yield to him in this, the most important step of his life."

"I am sure he will," exclaimed the young man, earnestly; "he will learn from my own lips, that my future happiness depends upon my union with the only woman I can ever love, and rather than doom me to wretchedness, he will sacrifice private feelings for the peace of his son."

"Aye, console yourself with that reflection, for I believe you are perfectly in the right," exclaimed Marlow.

"In that case then, you will not object to my visiting her as usual?"

"Most assuredly you will ever be received here with a hearty welcome," replied his friend; "we should grieve much at losing the society of one whom we all love, and shall look forward to your visits until the commands of your father are issued for their discontinuance."

"Which I am assured will never be the case."

"Well, I believe you are right enough there, or I should at once request you to come here no more," replied Marlow; "it has been my good fortune to gain the favourable opinion of your father, and I must needs admit that from the conversation which passed between us this evening, there is good ground for believing he will not object to your paying your addresses to my daughter. But let it be remembered, my dear sir, that you must make him your confidant in all things."

"I shall be sure to do that," answered young Bellamy; "for though indulgent to me in all things, I know well enough that he expects me not to be neglectful in my duty towards him, and it has ever been my chief care to prove that I fully appreciate the kindness that I have always received from him."

"Ask him for his counsel," exclaimed Marlow; "and take my word for it he will not refuse anything upon which he thinks your happiness depends. Nay, I have his own word for it, that he sees no objection to this projected union, and half an hour's conversation will convince you that your reliance upon his kindness has not been misplaced."

Before any reply could be made to this, they were joined by Mrs. Marlow and her daughter, when of course the conversation was changed to other subjects, and an agreeable hour was passed in talking over the bright prospects that were in view. At the usual early hour, the young lover took his leave, and returned home pretty well satisfied in his own mind, that he had nothing to fear from any opposition on the part of his father.



## CHAPTER VI.

THE PROSPERITY OF THE TEETOTALER  
MAKES HIM NOT FORGETFUL OF THE  
WANTS OF A FELLOW CREATURE.

BEING thus raised far above any expectations that he had formed, Frederick Marlow's thoughts were again directed towards the unfortunate man whose dissipation had brought him to the work-house. He had seen the horror with which he regarded the situation to which he was reduced, and determined to make good use of the means which were now within his power, he spoke to young Mr. Bellamy upon the subject, urging in the strongest manner his own claim to rescue a former friend from misery and want. The young gentleman, it will be remembered, had taken it upon himself to remove Thompson from the work-house to some place where he would be kindly treated, and his promise was not forgotten, but when Marlow expressed a wish to take all that upon himself, he yielded to his request, and it was agreed that the poor fellow should be the especial care of his old friend and companion. A neat and comfortable lodging was therefore taken for him, and with as little delay as possible Thompson was removed to it, and placed under the care of a nurse, who was to attend upon him, and, if it was within human power, to restore him to some share of his former health and vigour.

"Ah!" exclaimed the invalid, as soon as Marlow had conveyed him to his new abode; "this place seems to infuse new life into me. Here I can be my own master, and when strength returns, may walk once more into the green and pleasant fields that I have seen so little of for years past. All this is delightful to think of, Marlow, and yet there is one thing that will often throw a gloom upon my mind."

"What is that my dear fellow?" asked his friend.

"The thought that I shall be a heavy burden to you."

"Then never let that afflict you," answered Marlow, "for my means are sufficient for this and much more if it should be needful."

"You have been careful and saved money perhaps," said Thompson shak-

ing his head, "but that is no reason why I should be an incumbrance. Your family should have the benefit of all your hard earnings, and yet I, like a miserable pauper, am depriving them of a part of them."

"I find then that you have not heard of what Mr. Bellamy last did for me."

"You told me yourself that you are now a clerk in his counting house."

"I did, but his kindness stopped not there; for, determined to reward me to the utmost of his power, he has proposed to take me into partnership at Christmas, and the deeds to that effect are now being drawn up."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Thompson, "that you, who entered that house as one of the meanest of its servants, are now to be one of the heads of it?"

"You may take my word for it," answered Marlow; "so you see I shall not have to complain of your being a burden to me or my family. Indeed it will be far otherwise, for in prosperity what can give more pleasure to a man than to know that he is assisting an unfortunate fellow creature?"

"But you will not have the satisfaction of knowing that I am deserving of your kindness."

"And why are you not deserving of it?" asked Marlow. "A man that has done wrong can do no more than regret it, and I believe if ever your health is restored you will do as I have done, and endeavour to make amends for the misdeeds that have been thoughtlessly committed."

"I would, indeed," sighed the invalid, "but what chance is there that I ever shall recover?"

"Despair not, my good fellow," answered Marlow, "for you will now have the advantage of plenty of fresh air, and careful nursing. These, added to a more contented state of mind, may work wonders, and for my own part I am not without hopes of seeing you able to get about, even if your return to work should be impossible."

"Better would it be to die than drag on a miserable existence at the expence of my friend."

"Your friend can bear the expence, and thinks of it much less than you seem to do," exclaimed Marlow. "What I give shall not be bestowed grudgingly,



and never shall I regret this step unless indeed I should see that all my best endeavours to soften your misery are thrown away."

"Well, well, my dear friend," returned the other, "I'll not do anything that shall seem ungrateful, so for the present I accept your benevolence with gratitude. It may not be for long though, for I can feel that my once strong constitution is completely broken up, and that the hand of death will soon release me from my miseries."

"Have you no fear of dying?" asked Marlow.

"None, none," answered the other; "for I have repented of my sins, and prayed that they may be forgiven. Ay, Marlow, and I feel that they are pardoned too, or my brain would have been maddened long and long before this time."

"And supposing you were to recover, would there be no chance of again being tempted by drink?"

"Never!" he exclaimed; "the accursed bottle has lost all power over me, and I could now resist the temptation that has brought me to this dreadful state. When too late I feel how easy it is to do without the excitement of strong drinks, and at length I am convinced that they destroy more people than all the maladies that mankind are subject to. And even when they kill not, what a miserable creature is the man, when recovered from the stupor, he feels the depression of spirits, which is sure to follow."

"You are right there, Thompson," answered the other; "and yet the drunkard, though he knows the fearful consequences of his excess, seldom makes an effort to release himself from the misery he brings upon himself. For this reason I recommend the pledge to all my friends and acquaintances; it is, at all events, a solemn obligation that a man takes upon himself, and though some have certainly been known to break it, I believe it is only those who are not to be bound by any vow, however solemnly it may be worded."

"It is my intention to take it if ever I am able to get out again," exclaimed Thompson. "Not that I think it necessary to strengthen my own resolution

upon the matter, but that the example is a good one for other people."

"Ay," answered the other; "examples do much service, as we have witnessed in the case of poor John Ashman and his family. Their melancholy story is now, through various publications, known to thousands of persons, and I believe that many of them have given up drinking in consequence of the frightful misery that the bottle brought into a whole family."

"Besides that," exclaimed Thompson, "you yourself afford a cheering example of what may be done by the man who make temperance one of the chief rules of his life. The world has seen you gradually rising from good conduct, till you have reached the highest point that ambition could have desired. Marlow, despised and shunned as a drunkard, has by pursuing a contrary course, become respected and admired."

"And so it will be with you, my boy," exclaimed Marlow, "if you can recover from the illness which dissipation and intemperance have brought upon you."

"That I am afraid is not likely to be the case."

"Who knows what this change may do for you?" asked his friend, in accents of kindness. "You will no longer have a care upon your mind;—your thoughts never need recur to the past, and with restored peace and the care of your attendant, I believe your recovery is far from impossible."

"I have much to be thankful to you for," returned the other, "but with all that has been done for me, I have no hope of ever regaining my lost health. That I am afraid is gone for ever, but for all that I shall have a cheerful mind, and sometimes perhaps have the society of the man that I have so much reason to be grateful to."

"You may depend upon that," answered Marlow, "and in spite of what you have been saying, I hope the time is not very far off when you will be able to get as far as our house. You will always find us cheerful, Thompson, and that's just the sort of company you ought to keep so long as your mind is given to melancholy."

"It's no use trying to persuade me that I shall ever be able to do that," exclaimed the sick man, "for I know best how I feel, and that's quite enough to



tell me that I shall never be much better than I am at present. It will be something, however, to sit at my window and breathe the pure air, that seems somehow or another, never to find its way into a workhouse. Besides, they take care that you shall see nothing beyond its high, desolate looking walls, and that of itself is enough to make even the most healthy man sick."

"Ah!" returned the other, "and when the parish guardians are told of it, their reply is that it would not do to make the workhouse too comfortable, lest the poor should flock there as a refuge from their distress. Out upon such cold-heartedness say I! for in my opinion it is our duty to look after the comforts of the unfortunate, most of whom would rather obtain an honest living by their own industry if they could find employment. But it seems to be the notion now-a-days, that if the poor are to be relieved they ought to be made to feel that they are degraded."

"I know I felt so every hour that I was there," answered Thompson, "and therefore I have the more reason to thank you for releasing me from such a place."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed the other, "your thanks are due to young Mr. Bellamy rather than to me, for he it was that first proposed placing you in some comfortable abode where you might receive kindness and attention. And he would have carried out his generous intentions too, but that I begged of him to let me have the satisfaction of restoring an old acquaintance to the world that he was shut up from."

"It seems then," observed Thompson "that the young man possesses some of the good qualities of his father."

"He possesses all of them," exclaimed Marlow, "and I am the more pleased to say so as there is every reason to believe that in a short time he will be closely connected with me."

"Why what do you mean by that, Marlow."

"You will be surprised at what I'm going to say, I've no doubt," answered the other, "but it's perfectly true for all that. The fact is then that young Mr. Bellamy will be my son in law soon after he comes of age."

"What! is he going to marry your daughter."

"So it seems," unless things should run very cross indeed."

"And what does the elder Mr. Bellamy say to it."

"His consent has been given, and Mr. John is now the accepted lover of my daughter."

"Then wonders will never cease," exclaimed the other, "for who a year or two since would ever have expected Susan Marlow to marry the son and heir of one of the richest merchants in all London."

"Aye," answered his friend, "but now that I am going to have a share in the business. I shall be more on an equality with the wealthy merchant you speak of, so that the alliance of our children will bring no disgrace with it."

"And are you sure that when all these fine things come to pass you will not forget the man you now call your friend."

"Forget you," exclaimed Marlow warmly, "no, no, I flatter myself I am not quite so fickle as that either, for when once I form a friendship nothing ever shakes it unless there is sufficient ground for believing that it has been bestowed upon one who is unworthy of it. At one time if you remember Thompson I used to avoid you if possible whenever we met in the street, but you know the reason of it, and now that the cause is removed you shall find that my confidence is not to be moved with trifles. Only act up to the principles you have lately professed, and in my prosperity you shall find me the same firm friend as ever."

"Well, I believe you there," answered Thompson; "and you shall never have reason to be sorry for what you have done for me. Have'n't you placed me here in this comfortable lodging, instead of leaving me to end my days in a workhouse? and shall I, after that, repay your kindness by becoming the miserable wretch that I was, when almost dying before you in the street? Ah! you have indeed been my friend, and most heartily do I congratulate you, Marlow, on the prospect of your daughter becoming the wife of young Mr. Bellamy."

"Ah!" exclaimed the other, "the change that has taken place in my circumstances, is indeed most extraordinary. A few years ago I was pining with my family, in a state of the most abject poverty,



and now I am able to hold up my head with some of the first men in the city."

"And all through your own good conduct, Marlow."

"Yes," answered his friend; "I must be vain enough to agree with you there, for had I continued a drunkard much longer, I should have been carried to my grave long ago. But instead of that, things have prospered with me, as they would with many other people if they would be wise in time, and cast off this bad habit."

"And I should think there'll be plenty to follow your good example, when they see what temperance has done for you."

"It's to be hoped they may, my dear fellow," answered the other; "for what can be more disgraceful in an enlightened age, like this, than for a man to be led away by a vice that has brought ruin on so many? Hitherto, warnings have been thrown away, but when people see what may be done by an abstinence from liquor, there is some probability that thousands of thoughtless, dissipated men, will reform, and endeavour to become useful members of society."

"I only wish it was in my power to do so," exclaimed Thompson; "but unfortunately my health and strength are gone, and I must linger out a useless existence in dependence upon the charity of a friend."

"Nay, call it not charity," answered the other; "for if I have stretched forth a hand to save a fellow-creature from the destruction he had fallen into, it was done to render his future life happy. It is a duty that one man owes to another, and the performance of that duty cannot fail to afford pleasure to him who serves a friend in the time of need."

"That's very true, Marlow," answered the invalid; "you are happy I dare say at having made my condition more comfortable, and for that reason I am the less unwilling to accept your favours. Still, however, I feel myself like a pauper, and what makes matters still worse than all, is that I don't see any chance of ever being able to help myself."

"We neither of us know how that may be," exclaimed Marlow; "but even if you should be so unfortunate as to remain in this state all your life, the expense of supporting you will not be so great, that you need make yourself uncomfort-

able about it. At all events I shall find a pleasure in it, so say nothing more about your being dependent upon me."

"Do you think then I can forget that every farthing bestowed upon me, is taken from your own family?"

"If my wife and children were to suffer any privations through it," answered Marlow, "it would be acting wrong towards those whom I am bound to support in the best way my means will allow of. They will not, however, lose a single comfort by it, and I know their disposition well enough to feel certain that they will experience as much gratification as I do, in snatching you from the work-house."

"I believe you there, my dear friend," exclaimed Thompson; "for I know what warm hearts they all possess, and, even though I don't deserve all this kindness, there is not one of them that would grudge the assistance you afford me."

"Then, knowing that, you will surely feel no difficulty about accepting my assistance, till you are able to do something for yourself."

"As there's no help for it, I must needs do so," exclaimed the other; "but again I tell you there is not the slightest chance of my ever being better than I now am. Years of excess have worn down my constitution, and I must be content to suffer, as a just punishment for the crimes I have been guilty of."

"Well," exclaimed Marlow, "you repent the folly, at any rate, and I am in hopes, you may have more enjoyment in this life than you expect. Here you have the advantage of pure air, and as your mind becomes more calm, you will I dare say recover from the infirmities you are afflicted with."

"Aye," answered the other "if I could once manage to crawl out a bit, there would be some hopes for me. But my limbs have lost all their strength, and even with assistance I'm not able to walk even across the room."

"Then we must hire one of those chairs that invalids use," exclaimed Marlow; "and some poor man in the neighbourhood will be glad to earn a trifle by drawing you about on fine days. You'll have air enough then, and a little change will soon make quite another man of you."



"But only think of the expense, my dear fellow!"

"Expense must not be thought of if there's any chance of bringing you about again," replied Marlow; "I want to see you well once more my boy, and then, if you can get a little active employment, you'll not only be able to earn your own living, but recover your health, which will be better than all the rest."

"You seem to make quite sure of my recovery."

"So I have, from the very first Thompson."

"That's strange, too, for I have long since given up all hope."

"And very wrong it was of you to do so," answered Marlow; "for I have always found that when a man gives way to despair, he sinks for want of energy. Such has been your case, and it shall now be my endeavour to make you look forward to a speedy recovery."

"I should be an ungrateful fellow if I didn't oblige you when I can," exclaimed Thompson; "so I'll try to think as you do, and look forward to the time when I may get over this terrible affliction. I can promise to do that Marlow, though I'm afraid when all's done, I shall never be able to get back the good opinion of the world."

"There again you are wrong, my boy," exclaimed his friend; "for depend on it people will overlook the past when they see that you have reformed. Look at me for example—could any one have sunk lower in the world's opinion than I did? and yet now I enjoy the regard of many men, who at one period would have thought it a disgrace to be seen speaking to me."

"Aye, but then you have been lucky enough to get on and make yourself their equal."

"And so may you do, Thompson, if ever you get well enough to show that you are industrious as well as steady. You shake your head as if doubtful of recovering, but there's nothing ever to be gained by giving way to despair, and so I would advise you to pick up your spirits, and look forward with hope."

"I have promised to do so, and you shall find that I'll not be worse than my word," answered the other; "the change I shall find here will do me good, but it will be a lonely sort of life, I'm afraid,

and when one hasn't a companion to speak to, unpleasant thoughts are very apt to force themselves upon one's mind!"

"You will not be so lonely as you imagine," exclaimed Marlow; "for the people of the house have promised to keep you company as often as they can, and I shall myself frequently look in to see how you are getting on. Besides, my wife will sometimes give a call round, and as she is of a cheerful disposition, her visits will serve to raise your spirits."

"It will be very kind of her if she does come to see such a worthless fellow as I have been," he replied; "I don't deserve a thought, and yet how many friends have I found when their services were most needed."

"They would not be worthy to be called friends if they deserted you at such a time."

"Perhaps not," answered Thompson; "and yet how many men have seen themselves shunned and neglected when most they are in need of a little kindness and consolation. But with me it is quite different, for no sooner am I in trouble than friends come forward to give me their assistance."

"Aye, my good fellow," exclaimed the other; "but that is because you have shewn sorrow for the past, and are likely to be sincere in your repentance. It is the callous only who are treated with neglect, and they have no right to look for assistance from those who have looked upon their evil deeds with abhorrence."

"You believe then that I am sincere?"

"I do, indeed," he replied, "or I would not have put myself out of the way to serve you."

"Thank you for your good opinion, my boy," exclaimed Thompson; "for there's pleasure in seeing that one's word is still worth something, and it will be strange indeed, if ever I do anything to forfeit your favourable notions of me."

"I am sure you will not, and if ever you should be thoroughly restored to health I hope to see you rise in the world as rapidly as I have done."

"Nay, that's impossible, my dear fellow."



"Why is it impossible?" demanded Marlow.

"Because my character as a drunkard is so generally known, that people would not easily be persuaded to give me the employment I should want."

"You forget then, that as one of the principals in our house, I should be able to put you into a situation?"

"Ah, Marlow! you are indeed a true friend," exclaimed the other; "and I cannot find words to express half the gratitude I feel for the kindness you have shown me."

"My dear fellow, I want no thanks," answered Marlow; "and your gratitude will be best shown by a strict adherence to the promises you have made. So keep your mind composed, and with the good medical assistance which I shall take care to provide, you will, before long I hope, be able to make yourself useful in our warehouse."

Perceiving that Thompson was about to give utterance to his grateful feelings, Marlow rose from his seat, and shaking hands with his friend, took leave in order to return home. On his way there all his thoughts were directed towards the one object that he had so much at heart—that of fixing Thompson in those better principles which he had promised to follow, and then to reward him for it by advancing him to some situation in which he might receive a respectable income without having to undergo any very severe labour. Full of these thoughts he reached home, where, besides his own happy family, he found Mr. John Bellamy, who now seldom omitted paying a visit to Susan Marlow every evening, and was in fact, received as the accepted suitor for her hand. The return of the husband and father was hailed with joy by those who had been anxiously looking for him, and the first salutations being over, Mrs. Marlow, who knew the business he had been on, eagerly inquired whether Thompson had yet been removed to his new habitation, and how he had borne the fatigue in his present weak condition."

"The poor fellow is snug enough now," he replied; "and, like a child, he was so delighted with the change, that he complained very little of any inconvenience he may have felt."

"And do you still think he is sincere

in his promises to discontinue the use of intoxicating liquors?"

"If he is not sincere," replied her husband, "I will never again put faith in the promise of any man. But I cannot doubt him for a moment, for he has suffered so much, that it's scarcely likely he'll ever return to a course that has been productive of so much misery to himself."

"Besides," observed young Bellamy; "he has had plenty of time for serious reflection, and he must be blind indeed, if he has not seen how much happier are sober people than those who throw away their time among dissolute companions. In your husband he sees a striking contrast to himself, for whilst one has been brought down to the very lowest state of poverty, the other has risen in the world through his own merit, till he has become respected by those who would at one time have shunned him."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "but the greatest satisfaction we have, is that our children benefit by the change, even more than we do ourselves. Our boy is now well provided for in the house to which his father belongs, and Susan, will, before very long, become the wife of one of the principal merchants in the city of London. Thus, we have the satisfaction of knowing that those we love are not likely to experience such sufferings as we ourselves have gone through, and when old age comes upon us, we shall be able to look around with the happy consciousness that we have not been altogether useless in the world."

"And it is to be hoped," observed the young man; "that there will be thousands of others anxious to follow so excellent an example."

"I do indeed expect that it will not be thrown away," returned Marlow; "for I believe mankind in general are to be easily led into the right way, if it can be shewn that there is more happiness in a quiet, steady life, than in all the racket and disorder to which many are so much addicted. Let those who doubt my words, look at our now happy home, and compare it with what it was a very few years since."

"Then," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "we were obliged to put up with a miserable garret, scantily furnished, and wanting almost every necessary of



# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





existence. Now we can afford to live in a respectable house; our children both in their conduct and appearance are a credit to us, and our table is spread with abundance, though not extravagantly. These are things worthy to be considered by the reckless, who, if they would only give themselves time for reflection, might, by perseverance and sobriety, attain an equally enviable situation."

"Well," answered her husband, "there's one thing to be said, my dear, the world grows wiser, and we may yet see the day when the accursed bottle will have lost its baneful influence."

"I am afraid that will not be while the government derives so large a revenue from the liquor that intoxicates and stupefies those who drink of it."

"If we wait for a law to prevent distillation," exclaimed Marlow, "I'm afraid the death blow to intemperance will not be given in our time."

"But why," asked Frank Marlow, "should our rulers encourage vice when it is their duty to suppress it by every means in their power? I have never heard of their doing anything to prevent drunkenness, except that the magistrates sometimes fine people a few shillings when they are taken before them; but that has never been known to cure a hard drinker."

"They only laugh at the fine," replied his father, "and when it is paid, walk into the nearest gin palace to swallow more of the liquid fire."

"But it kills a great many I believe?" observed Susan Marlow.

"Aye," exclaimed her father, "more than the most devastating malady or fever that ever visited this world of ours. It is known to destroy hundreds of thousands every year, yet how seldom is it that even death itself terrifies those who are infatuated with drink. Punish intoxication with imprisonment—make a crime of it, and there would then be some chance of man becoming a more rational animal."

"But they'll never do that," observed young Bellamy, "for people in high life, as well as the lower orders, are given to excessive drinking, and they will hardly make a law that would fall so unpleasantly on many of themselves."

"I am happy to say, my dear friend,"

answered Marlow, "that in the best society a great reformation in that respect has taken place. Men of education, except in a very few instances, no longer debase themselves by such scenes of intemperance as we used to hear of a few years ago. Two or three glasses of wine in the course of the day is all they take, and no real gentleman would now like to be seen in a state of intoxication."

"That," said Frank Marlow, "is at any rate setting a good example by those that we look up to."

"And will no doubt have a very excellent effect," answered his father. "It will, however, I am afraid be a work of time, for the evil habit has taken a deep root and cannot be entirely eradicated all at once."

"But I don't think it will be so long as you fancy," observed Mr. Bellamy, "for, as was remarked just now, people are growing wiser, and when they see how much more happy they may be with a little prudence, they'll give up squandering their money in drink, and buy more food and other comforts instead. Such at least is my notion, though many think with you that it must be a work of considerable time."

"Well, my dear boy," exclaimed Marlow, "I care not how soon this foul blot upon the morals of the people is washed away. Already Temperance Societies have effected a vast deal of good, and they are still progressing favourably, though I am sorry to say we can never take up the newspapers without seeing that the time of the magistrates is taken up very considerably in hearing charges of drunkenness. Men and women are nightly found in a state of intoxication. Sometimes they are incapable of taking care of themselves, others grow furious and come to blows, and others again have recourse to the knife, when if death ensues, the miserable wretch is tried for his life, and then comes the gallows to wind up the fearful scene."

"'Tis indeed a terrible picture you have drawn, dear father," said Frank, "but I hope, if the cause of temperance goes on successfully, we shall soon see better days."

"I have no doubt a great improvement in that respect is going on," replied his father, "but I should like to



see the change more rapid than it is. Every man has by this time heard of the benefits to be derived by giving up the use of intoxicating drinks, and yet how many of them there are who continue to indulge in the pernicious habit! They confess themselves to be unable to conquer the infatuation, and thereby acknowledge that they have no more controul over themselves than have savages or even wild beasts."

"Have patience, my dear Frederick," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "and you will see things going on as favourably as you could wish. Besides, the change is more likely to be permanent, if it is gradual, for we may be sure that it has been the result of reflection, and that there is a firm determination to become a sober man."

"Well, there is some truth in that, it must be confessed," he replied, "so like yourself, Mary, I shall be content to watch the progress of the good cause, and will never complain if it should be a little slower than I could wish. Thompson was a long while before he could see the folly he was guilty of, but I believe there is nothing to be dissatisfied with on that account, for he is now fully aware of the good change he has made, and, in my opinion, will never return to his former evil habits."

At this juncture supper was announced to be ready, and all adjourned to the next room. In an hour afterwards young Mr. Bellamy took his leave of this happy family and returned to his home.

## CHAPTER VII.

MARLOW OBTAINS THE RESPECT OF HIS FELLOW CITIZENS, AND IS ELECTED BY THEM TO AN OFFICE OF TRUST.

WHEN Christmas arrived, Mr. Bellamy, in fulfilment of his promise, took Marlow into partnership with him, and thus the latter, as the reward of his faithful services, found himself in a rank of life that placed him on an equality with some of the first merchants of London. And most cordially too, was he received by them, for they knew his worth, and respected him all the more for having attained his present eminence

through the steadiness and straightforward zeal with which he had served his employer. That Christmas was the happiest Marlow had ever spent, not that he had ever aspired to such a proud distinction, but he felt conscious that it had been conferred upon him as a well-merited reward, and a mark of the high esteem of the person whom he had served with uprightness and integrity.

He had now more frequent opportunities of visiting his friend Thompson, who, under better medical treatment than he had formerly received, seemed to be progressing toward recovery. He had been placed under the care of Mr. Melville, into whose house it will be remembered he had been taken on the morning when his illness commenced, and after that gentleman had prescribed for him some few times he was able to give a tolerably confident opinion that as the spring advanced his patient would be able to walk about in the neighbourhood. This would give him strength, and a few weeks more might so far re-establish his health as to allow him to go to business. This piece of intelligence filled Marlow's heart with joy, for he saw that his friend was still firm in his determination to avoid intemperance, and having already determined what situation in the house was best adapted to him, he waited with no little impatience for the time when Thompson would be able to apply himself once more to business. As week after week rolled by the prognostications of Mr. Melville were gradually realized; his patient was able to leave the house, his strength returned, and when summer came, Thompson returned, completely reformed to the same house of business from which he had been turned away in disgrace some few years before. And he felt at home there, too, though some, whom he knew before, laughed at him for being a teetotaler, and would fain have prevailed on him to take a drop with them just out of old fellowship. These solicitations, however, he had no difficulty in resisting; he even ventured so far as to remonstrate with them upon the folly of encouraging so bad a habit, but this, of course, only met with derision, and he saw too plainly that none of them were likely to reform themselves till they had experienced as



heavy an affliction as that which had happily brought him to his senses. This circumstance soon came to the ears of Marlow, and he argued well from it, since it afforded a satisfactory proof that his old friend was sincere in his promised reformation.

When the following summer arrived, which was in fact about the time of Thompson's return to work, Mr. John Bellamy succeeded his father in his share of the business, and the elder gentleman retired to his handsome villa in the suburbs of London, where he might always be found whenever his advice or experience were to be consulted. Matters being so far arranged, young Bellamy was exceedingly anxious that his marriage should take place without delay. This however, was opposed both by his own father as well as Susan's, who thought it should be postponed for a few months, as early marriages but too frequently terminate in unhappiness. Young Bellamy thought that was quite impossible in the present instance, but as he had always yielded to the opinions of his parent, he did so now, only requesting that his marriage should not be postponed for a longer period than twelve months. This latter point was yielded, and the lover continued his visits to Susan Marlow on the same footing as before.

The autumn came, and passed away into the dark abyss of time, being succeeded by the chilling winds of November, which month all the world knows is proverbial for fogs and darkness,—at least as far as London is concerned. But it brought to Marlow a pleasurable surprise, for as he was one day busy in the counting-house, he was informed that three or four gentlemen wished to speak to him on business. Being rather occupied at the time, he was a little vexed at the interruption; but, upon second thoughts, he desired that the gentlemen should be shewn into his private office, which communicated with the counting-house. He had scarcely taken his seat there, when he heard the footsteps of several persons approaching, and on the door being opened he perceived half-a-dozen gentlemen, all of whom he knew to be persons living in his own immediate neighbourhood. What all this could mean it was impossible to guess ;

but his wonder was soon put an end to by one of the gentlemen, a Mr. Pritchard, who acted as spokesman upon the occasion.

"I dare say, Mr. Marlow," he began, "you are a good deal surprised at this visit of ours ; but I hope your surprise will give way to a feeling of pleasure when you hear the motive that has induced us to pay you this visit. In short, you have heard no doubt that our respected Common Councilman, Mr. Vesey, is about to retire next St. Thomas's-day, and a great number of persons in the ward have sent us as a deputation to inquire if you have any objection to being put forward as his successor?"

"This is indeed an unexpected honour, gentlemen," said Marlow diffidently — "one that I have every reason to be proud of, though I feel convinced that there are many other citizens in the ward to whom you could better trust your interests."

"We think differently, my dear sir," answered Mr. Pritchard, smiling, "and there is some likelihood of our being right when so many of us have come to the same conclusion."

"But I am no public man, and am unknown to most of you, except as a neighbour."

"We know you for an honest, straightforward man," exclaimed the spokesman, "and that is just the sort of person that will best represent us in the Court of Common Council. We might perhaps have selected some one who would make more noise and bluster, but we are all men of business, Mr. Marlow, and want a plain-sailing person like you, who will represent your constituents without being laughed at as a fellow that has more sound than sense."

"If such is your opinion, you do me great honour," replied the other ; "I feel your kindness deeply, and would certainly accept the offer, but that I do not think myself entitled to take my seat in a place where all are men of higher standing than myself."

"Excuse me there, my dear sir, for no firm in the city stands higher than that of Bellamy and Marlow."

"I am proud of your compliment," exclaimed the other, "and will not deny that the gentleman who has just retired from the concern, raised it to its present



eminence by his honourable and upright dealings. He would indeed have been worthy to occupy the station you have proposed for me; but my own humble origin would render it presumptuous for me to aspire to any rank in the city."

"My dear sir," returned Mr. Pritchard, "where should we look for our Common Councilmen if not among those whose good character stands the highest. The honour is one that ought to be conferred upon those who deserve it, but I am sorry to say there are some few persons there who I would rather see in any other station. You are the man we have selected, and, if you stand, your election will be almost certain, for Mr. Vesey has promised to canvas all his old supporters in your behalf."

"But I am afraid that while attending to my public duties I should be neglecting my private ones."

"You have a partner who no doubt will see that the business don't suffer through your occasional absence. Besides, the attendance of a Common Councilman is not required very often, and even then only for a short period. The duties, though important, are light, and even if they were not so, you will perhaps allow me to remark that it is incumbent upon us all to perform any office that may be beneficial to our fellow subjects."

"There you are quite right," answered Marlow, "and I would not refuse this application which you gentlemen have in kindness made, if I thought there was any possibility of my benefiting my fellow citizens."

"It is our general opinion that you will benefit us very greatly," answered Mr. Pritchard. "In fact, we know your business habits, and it will be a great disappointment if you refuse our application."

"Well, gentlemen, I will consider the matter," he replied, "I must repeat that there appears to be too much presumption in thrusting myself forward when there are so many others who are more worthy of the honour. You know, I presume, that my origin is an extremely humble one?"

"We have heard something about it," answered the other, "but what matters an humble origin if the man has raised himself entirely by his own excellent conduct. They are the persons that

ought to hold prominent places in the city, and that is one of the reasons why we have selected you in preference to many others, whose characters are equally unblemished."

"But my dear sir, my character is not so unblemished a one as you seem to imagine."

"Indeed! I have never heard anything to your disadvantage."

"You know not then that I was once one of the veriest vagabonds on the face of God's earth."

"I have heard," answered Mr. Pritchard, "that at a former period of your life you were a confirmed drinker."

"I was," he replied, "and endured through it, for years, such a life of misery and privation as can scarcely be imagined. The fatal passion brought me to ruin, and my wife and family were in a state of the greatest destitution."

"But you reformed, and from that period I believe you date your rise in the world."

"I certainly gave up drinking," answered Marlow, "but no one had any confidence in my promises of abstinence, and it was in vain that I applied for employment, till in a fortunate hour I took the pledge. Then it was that Mr. Bellamy thought there was hope of me; I was taken back into his house, and from that period have been gradually rising till I became what I am."

"Well, my dear sir," exclaimed Mr. Pritchard, "I have heard nothing yet that proves you to be unworthy of the honour that has been proposed for you. We may regret that you ever fell into the habits of irregularity, but there is so much praise due to the man who has resolution enough to conquer a vicious practice, that I think you are now perfectly clear from any blame that at one time may have been attached to you. In short, the example is a most valuable one, and may perhaps save many an unfortunate man who yields himself to so delusive a vice as drunkenness. By breaking yourself of the habit you have proved to the world that it is in the power of even the most dissipated, so to govern himself as to merit and receive the applause of his fellow creatures."

"Perhaps you are right there, my



“dear sir,” answered Marlow, “but people will say that, with the recollection of the past, my most prudent course would have been to remain as much as possible in obscurity.”

“Ill-natured people might say so,” replied Mr. Pritchard, “but those whose opinion is worth having would think you acted wisely in accepting whatever honours may fall in your way.”

“What ground would there be for such an opinion?”

“Simply this,” answered Mr. Pritchard; “it would show to the world that the man who has enough courage to confess his fault and abstain from it in future, may rise in the esteem and confidence of his fellow-creatures. Your example is a most extraordinary one, and cannot fail to do an immense deal of good to those who believe that when once their character is lost it is gone for ever. So you see Mr. Marlow, you have not yet given us a sufficient reason for declining our proposition.”

“I have not yet positively declined it,” he replied, “though it must be confessed I should greatly prefer a private life to a public one.”

“But if everybody was of the same opinion public business must come to a stand still.”

“Granted,” answered Marlow; “but it happens fortunately that there are always men who are willing to be thrust forward whenever there is any place of honour in view. I however, am differently constituted, and would rather spend any leisure time that I may have with my family, than mix myself up in affairs that may be better performed by any other person. As I have before said, however, I will not give a decided answer at present, but will talk the matter over with my wife, whose counsel and opinion I have found most valuable on many former occasions.”

“We will do ourselves the honour of waiting upon you again, then,” said Mr. Pritchard. “Your decision, though, should be known by to-morrow, for the day of election draws very near, and we have not even thought of any other person in case you should decline a contest.”

“To-morrow then let it be,” exclaimed Marlow; “one hour to-night will be quite sufficient to make up my mind, so

that when you call again I will be prepared with my answer.”

“May these gentlemen and myself venture to hope that you will accede to our wishes?”

“At any rate,” he replied, “I will not give a refusal, if I thought that in my public career, I could be of any service to my fellow-citizens. If on the other hand, I should be of a contrary opinion I shall most respectfully decline the offer in order that some more useful person may be chosen instead of me.”

“I am afraid, my dear sir, it is your modesty that stands in the way.”

“It should not do so, if I thought the public could by any possibility benefit by my services,” answered Marlow. “That I prefer a retired, quiet life is certain, but my own feelings shall not be consulted if it appears that by stepping forth into public life, I can assist in furthering the happiness of other persons. I confess though, I have little faith in my own powers in that respect, and for that reason my inclinations are still to remain exactly as I am.”

“But don’t you think, Mr. Marlow,” said another of the gentlemen, “that if you decline it may let into the Council-chamber some brawler who will be continually interrupting business instead of forwarding it?”

“Such might certainly be the case,” he replied, “but most of these brawlers cease to thrust themselves forward when they see that their noise and clamour is not heeded. Let them once sink into insignificance, and their reign of folly is at an end.”

“And in that case we had better be without a representative, for such a man would but seldom attend to his duties.”

“I understand what you mean, my dear sir,” answered Marlow; “like this gentleman you would have me accept your proposal rather than admit some man into the office who would not long have the confidence of his constituents. The subject is indeed worthy of my consideration, and will very probably weigh considerably in favour of the proposal you have honoured me with.”

“In that case,” observed Mr. Pritchard, “I believe we can promise that you are certain of being brought in tri-



umphantly, for, as I mentioned before, Mr Vesey is strongly in your favour, and he can bring up so many votes that you will be elected by a considerable majority. Besides, we have not yet heard of any person being proposed in opposition, so that the affair will cost you very little either of time or money."

"Well gentlemen," exclaimed Marlow, "I shall grudge neither in moderation, if by undertaking this duty I can be of any service to those who have sent you to me. I am afraid, however, that my poor abilities will fall very short of what you expect, but in that case, should I come forward, you will have an opportunity at the end of another year, of showing how much you are disappointed, by sending into the Common Council a man more able to serve you zealously, but perhaps not more anxious to perform his duty than I should be."

"I am in hopes, by what you have just said," observed Mr. Pritchard, "that you have already half made up your mind to return a favourable answer to our requisition."

"The truth is, my dear sir," he replied, "it is not easy to give a refusal to the kind intentions of one's friends, and I certainly have hesitated that I may give the proposition all the attention it merits. I have said that I will consult my wife, and she will—"

"Decide in your favour, no doubt, Mr. Marlow."

"Why do you think so?" inquired the other, laughing.

"Because the ladies like to see their husbands raised to stations of honour," answered Mr. Pritchard. "They participate in them, and though there is nothing remarkably great in being the wife of a Common Councilman, the office very frequently leads to something higher, an alderman's gown, for instance, and that, except when death interferes, conducts the fortunate wearer to the seat of the chief magistrate of this wealthy city."

"Ah!" laughed Marlow, "you are now holding out a bait that you think it impossible for me to resist. But what an extravagant notion. it would be were I to flatter myself for a moment that one so humble and insignificant as myself could ever, by any possibility gain the highest honour that it is in the

power of his fellow citizens to bestow?"

"I see nothing extravagant in the notion," replied the other, "for you now hold a high station among our merchants and that is the class of persons who usually become our mayors."

"Well," exclaimed Marlow, "we'll carry this argument no further lest I should really get to castle building which is one of the last things a sober tradesman should be guilty of. Besides, I should make but a sorry Lord Mayor, seeing that I could drink nothing stronger than toast and water whilst my guests were taking that that I have an abhorrence to. Be that as it may, however, I will give this proposal of yours my most serious attention, and to-morrow at about the same hour I will give you a decided answer."

Mr. Pritchard and his friends then rose, and once more urging him to accept the offer, retired to inform their brother requisitionists with the result of their mission.

When he was left to himself, Marlow reflected on what had passed and could scarcely feel convinced that it was not all a dream. The honour itself, it is true is not a very dignified one, but it showed that he had gained the confidence of his fellow citizens, and that too by means that he felt were most creditable to him. He had mixed but little with them because he from principle absented himself from all society where drinking was carried on, nor had he often troubled his head with public affairs, loving as he did the calm domestic quiet of his own home endeared to him as it was by the presence of those whom he most regarded. Yet in spite of all this he had been selected to succeed a man who for many years had enjoyed the confidence of his neighbours and who had retired from active life amidst the regret of all those who knew him. This was indeed an honour so valuable that Marlow determined to consider well before he gave his decision.

On reaching home he found the usual party seated round the fire, including of course Mrs. Edwards, who was now considered as part of the family. Marlow took his usual place among them, but he was observed to be more thoughtful than usual, and betraying an absence of mind that was not customary when



surrounded by his happy family. On two or three occasions Mrs. Marlow inquired if anything was the matter with him, but he returned evasive answers, wishing to defer an explanation of what had occurred till they could speak more in private. At length, however, having been repeatedly urged, he said he had seen some gentlemen in the course of the day, and was thinking of the conversation that had passed between them.

"Ah!" exclaimed his wife with some alarm, "then I am afraid they were the bearers of bad news."

"On the contrary," he replied; "I heard from them nothing but what was most satisfactory to my own feelings."

"And yet, Frederick, you have been sitting there all this time without telling me what it is."

"You will wrench the secret out of me I see," exclaimed her husband, laughing, "I intended that it should not at present be known to any one but you and I, but there is curiosity in every countenance, so I will at once out with the whole truth. What say you, my dear, to my putting myself up next St. Thomas's-day as one of the candidates for the office of Common Councilman of our ward?"

"My dear have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Upon my word I hardly know whether I have or not," he replied. All I can say about the matter is that I have this day been waited on by a deputation of gentlemen—my neighbours—and they are very anxious that I should succeed a highly respected member who is about to retire from the bustle of public life.

"And pray what reply did you make to them?"

"I gave no promise," answered Marlow, "because in all important steps I like to have your opinion first. To-morrow, however, they are to call upon me again, and then I am to tell them whether I accede to their wishes or not."

"Merely on us!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards, "what great folks we shall all be, when you are a member of the City Parliament."

"But my dear lady, I am not quite certain whether I shall accept the proffered honour."

"Why you surely would not refuse so handsome an offer?"

"That will entirely depend upon my wife's opinion on the subject," replied Marlow. "Her advice is always worth listening to, and if she approves of my launching out into public life, why I shall say nothing to oppose her."

"What do you think of it yourself, my dear?"

"I have scarcely an opinion to give, Mary," he replied, "but you know I prefer quiet to bustle, and am by no means anxious to make myself conspicuous. Now the honour of being a Common Councilman may not be very great, but it is satisfactory to see that one has the confidence of one's fellow citizens, and for that reason, if you have nothing to urge against it, I believe I shall consent to the wishes of my friends."

"And you are perfectly in the right," answered Mrs. Marlow, "for I believe the office will occupy but little of your time, whilst it may serve to raise you in the estimation of those whose regard is worth having. Besides, it will give you some little patronage, I believe, and that may be well bestowed upon any poor person that you may think deserving of assistance."

"You would have me understand then that you wish me to accept the offer that has been so handsomely made."

"I do, if there is no objection of your own in the way."

"Then my answer is ready for them when they come to-morrow," exclaimed Marlow. "I will put up for the office, in the hope that my services may prove beneficial to those who have placed so much reliance in me."

"And then," interposed Mrs. Edwards, "who knows but we may next see you Lord Mayor of London?"

"Lord Mayor of London!" exclaimed Susan Marlow and her brother at the same instant.

"And why not as well as any other man?" demanded young Bellamy, who had been an attentive listener to what was passing before him.

"My friends were joking me upon that very subject this morning," said Mr. Marlow, "but they little know how much I should dislike being placed in any very prominent situation."



# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





"And why should you dislike it?" asked Mrs. Edwards.

"Because it would too frequently cause comparisons in my mind of my past and present condition," he replied. "I should think even more than I do now, of that horrible night when my wife and children,—who had nothing to eat for four-and-twenty hours,—must have gone supperless to bed but for your charity. I don't often speak upon that subject, Mrs. Edwards, but I often think of it though, and shall ever feel gratitude to you for the willing assistance you that night rendered us."

"I'm sure you have not much to thank me for," she replied, "for it was but a scanty supply that I was able to give them, and you have since repaid me for it a thousand times over. What I gave you was one poor supper, and from that night I have been made to partake of the best you have had to bestow."

"Aye," he exclaimed, "and never again shall you know the terrible gripe of poverty. My house shall be yours,—aye, even though,—as we were just now joking about,—I were to become Lord Mayor of London; there should be a seat of honour for the friend who put forth her hand to me in my distress."

"Only fancy me seated there in state!" she exclaimed.

"Aye," laughed Marlow, "you may well say 'fancy,' for it is one of those improbabilities that are too ridiculous to be spoken of even as a subject for jesting. Chance seems to favour me so far as getting a seat in the Common Council chamber, but even there I might not wish to go a second year."

"Should you have an idea of this sort of thing if it had not been mentioned by these gentlemen?" asked Mrs. Marlow.

"Never," he replied, "it is one of the very last things that would ever have entered my mind."

"But you have no objection now that it has been proposed?"

"No; I am not at all displeased with the idea. Not from any empty ambition, but that I think I may be able to make myself of some use to my fellow men instead of resting satisfied with merely looking to my own interests. I never thought of it before, Mary, but I now feel satisfied that a man may assist

others even while he is striving to push his own way through the world."

"To be sure he may; and you I am sure, will never let an opportunity pass."

"Besides," observed young Bellamy, again putting in a word, "Mr. Marlow will not be required in the business so much now that Frank and I are old enough to look after its management. It's our turn to strap to, that he who has been labouring for years, may take his rest from toil."

"I shall not need much rest whilst I am in my present enjoyment of health," exclaimed Marlow. "An active life suits me best, for when I have nothing to do, my thoughts travel back to former times, and they have nothing very pleasant to present to my view."

"But by-and-bye you will need repose," answered the young man, "and by that time you will perhaps pretty well have forgotten whatever was unpleasant in former days."

"I can never forget those evil times, my dear boy. Those miseries were brought on by my own madness,—my love of drink, and had I suffered them alone, the punishment would have been richly deserved. But my wife and children languished for want of food, and I felt for them bitterly, though all my sufferings were of no avail towards softening the dreadful torments they endured."

"Don't speak of that now, Frederick," exclaimed his wife.

"But I must speak of it," he replied, "for if I was to keep those thoughts pent up in my own bosom they would torture me into madness. It is only by sometimes giving utterance to my feelings that I can get rid of that heavy weight that seems to press upon my heart."

"Then that," exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, "affords another reason why you should accept the offer that has been made to you to-day. It will occupy your mind, and you will then think less frequently of those scenes that I was in hopes were almost forgotten. Yes, my dear," she added more cheerfully, "we must get you elected Common Councilman, and then the importance of your new station in life will give another and a better turn to your thoughts."



"Well, I am resolved then to make the attempt."

"And if you do that I suppose you will be sure to succeed?"

"So they tell me," he replied, "for the gentleman who is about to resign has promised me all his influence, which is said to be so great as to make my return certain. The whole affair I believe is managed something after the fashion of electing a member of parliament, and our worthy citizens attach pretty well as much importance to the one as they do to the other. I shall, however, take very little trouble in the affair, so if I am returned it will be entirely owing to the zealous kindness of my supporters."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Marlow, "how they came to fix their thoughts upon you when they were in want of a successor to the gentleman who is going to resign."

"The truth is," he replied, "the gentlemen who waited upon me this morning spoke so many flattering things of myself that I should be afraid to repeat them for fear of being suspected of vanity. I may, however, tell you that they have a favourable opinion of my straight-forward conduct, and for that reason I was selected to represent them in the civic House of Commons. And yet I wonder at it too," he said after a brief pause, "for they seem to be quite aware of the reckless scoundrel I once was, and yet in spite of that they ——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Mrs. Marlow, putting her hand over his mouth; "we must hear no more of that to-night, for you have already made us all uncomfortable by referring to matters that should long since have been forgotten. In truth, my dear husband, you must be either a Common Councilman, or something else; for it will never do if you suffer these melancholy fits to grow upon you."

Marlow said no more, and the conversation took a more cheerful turn upon different subjects till it was time for young Mr. Bellamy to take his leave. When the door had closed upon him, the family bade each other good night, and all repaired to their several apartments.

Having now completely made up his mind upon the affair, Marlow on the following day gave an answer in the affirmative to the gentlemen who had waited upon him, and forthwith the

most active exertions were made for the return of the new candidate. It so happened, however, that an opponent had sprung up in the meantime, and as there seemed to be a tolerably equal chance between them, Marlow expressed a wish to resign his own pretensions in order to avoid the possibility of being mortified by a defeat. This, however, his partisans would not listen to for a moment; they felt assured of his triumphant return, and would not lose their favourite, however he might wish to retire from the contest. Never was an election carried on with more spirit. Committee-rooms were engaged; flags and banners were exhibited in all parts of the ward; squibs issued from the press by one party were answered by other squibs that issued from the press engaged on the other side. In all these movements Marlow took little or no interest, for he began heartily to wish that he had never suffered himself to be put forward as a candidate. But the wish was of no avail, for his friends were determined that there should be no retreat for him, and he was obliged to go with the stream into which he had been dragged. Had he guessed the figure he would be made to cut, nothing would ever have induced him to place himself in so conspicuous a situation.

At length came the important day, and the city, or at least, those wards in which there was to be a contest, were on the tip-toe of expectation. Marlow was perhaps least interested of anybody, for he was heartily sick of the constant turmoil in which he had been engaged. He was present in the hall, but made no speech, leaving that to others who were more fond of hearing themselves talk. Then came the voting, and in the first hour he was at the head of the poll, another hour increased his majority, and at night he returned home Common Councilman for —— Ward.

## CHAPTER VIII.

GOOD INTENTIONS FRUSTRATED.—THOMPSON RETURNS TO HIS OLD HABITS OF INTEMPERANCE.

THE reader, perhaps was not prepared for the announcement that heads this chapter, and yet it is a melancholy fact.



that the bitter experience that Thompson had had was not sufficient to fortify him against the evil counsels of those who had abandoned themselves to the evil habits of intemperance. At first, as we have seen, he was firm enough in the better resolutions he had formed, and for a few months even he went on to the entire satisfaction of his friend and employer. He was always attentive to his duties, always sober, and in every act of his life was an excellent example to those who had an opportunity of seeing him frequently. Unfortunately, however, this was not to last very long, for he was of a weak and yielding disposition, and unable to bear the continued laughter and sneers of those who bantered him upon his conversion, he at length returned to those old habits that had on a former occasion brought him to the lowest depths of poverty.

His evenings were now always passed in a public house, where he was surrounded by men of the most abandoned habits. At first, it is true, he was moderate in his potations, and returned to his home at a tolerably early hour; but by degrees, he drank more and more—remained longer with his vicious associates, and never left them till he was in a state of intoxication. In the morning, he would reflect upon what he had done, and resolve to amend in future, but this his companions took care to prevent, and at length so frequently was he in the habit of neglecting the business intrusted to him, that Mr. Marlow sometimes spoke to him upon the subject, and endeavoured to point out to him the consequences that a continuance of such a career must bring upon him. All this Thompson took in very good part; thanked his friend for the interest he took in him, and promised to break himself of so dangerous a habit. Perhaps he really meant to keep his word, but be that as it may, he continued in the old course till Mr. Marlow was obliged to speak somewhat severely to him.

“How is it that you have grown so inattentive to business of late?” he asked one morning when the countenance of Thompson betrayed the excesses in which he had been indulging on the previous night. “You are now seldom at your post till long after the hour when you ought to be here, and

even then go through your duties in a less satisfactory manner than formerly.”

“I never neglect anything do I?” asked Thompson, scarcely knowing what excuse to make.

“My dear fellow I have no wish to find fault,” answered his employer; “but for your own sake, I wish to remind you of what must follow a continuance of your present course. You are getting into the old way, I am afraid, and have already forgotten the said vicissitudes that befel you on a former occasion.”

“My memory is not quite so bad as all that, for I suffered enough for the recollection to last as long as I live.”

“Then why not give up bad company before it is too late?”

“I don’t know what you mean by bad company.”

“Come, come, Thompson,” exclaimed the other, “I don’t want to see you out of temper, but the truth is, a great alteration has taken place in you lately and I should be no friend of yours to see you rushing head long into ruin without reminding you of what must be the end of all this.”

“You mean to say, I suppose, that you are beginning to get tired of having me here?”

“On the contrary I wish you to remain with me as long as we live, and it is that desire which prompts me to speak to you now so seriously. Reflect within yourself, Thompson, I entreat, for there is yet time for you to break off a habit that must end in your own destruction.”

“Ah!” muttered Thompson, “you think it a crime for a man to enjoy himself after his day’s work is done.”

“Nonsense,” exclaimed Mr. Marlow, “you know there is no one who is better pleased to see men enjoy themselves than I am. But enjoyment ought to be rational, and I can see none in people sitting down to drink what they know to be a most pernicious poison.”

“But it ain’t likely that we should all have the same notions of enjoyment. Now, for my own part I don’t go into a public-house for the mere purpose of drinking; I go for the sake of company, and there can’t be much harm in that, I should think.”

“The company to be found in a



public house is not likely to be very respectable."

"And yet how many thousands of tradesmen are to be found in those places."

"There's no denying that, Thompson," answered the other, "but the habit is a very bad one, and I hope the time is not far distant when it will be considered a disgrace to seek such society as is to be found in tippling houses."

"You think then no respectable man would go into one?"

"Some," answered Mr. Marlow, "who are respectable as far as station in life goes, may sometimes be seen there, but they little think how much they are lowering themselves by so doing. They meet there to smoke and drink, and the conversation carried on is frequently of the most foul and offensive description. The mind thus becomes tainted, and man thus loses the respect of his fellow-creatures."

"That may be the case in some instances," replied Thompson, "but it would be hard to judge everybody by the same rule. Not, however, that I want to argue in favour of a man being fond of company, for I know your opinion upon the subject, and it's not for me, who am only your servant, to oppose my notions against yours."

"But you seem to forget," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "that the fact of my being placed in a situation above you is entirely owing to my having given up the sort of society that I am speaking against. Had it not been for that, I should have remained the same miserable wretch that you once knew me."

"Aye, aye, I'm aware of all that" answered the other. "but it is n't every one that has resolution enough to break himself of a bad habit"

"And yet you have contrived to do so till very lately."

"Well, and I was in great hopes the good resolution would have lasted," answered the other. "I tried as much as possible to resist temptation, and for some months succeeded, but at length I was over-persuaded, and from that night I have been getting worse and worse."

"You mean to say that you yielded to temptation."

"That's it, indeed."

"And do you think if you were removed for a while from these dangerous men that you could conquer this unfortunate passion for dissipation and evil company?"

"I do n't exactly understand your meaning."

"Then I'll explain myself," answered Marlow; "I was thinking that if you had a holiday for a month or two, and went into the country, you might probably return with a determination to pursue a steady course of life."

"It is very good of you to be so thoughtful of me," exclaimed Thompson, "but I'm afraid it wouldn't be of any use for me to go into the country."

"You don't like the idea of leaving London, perhaps?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, that's just it. I never did like the country, and to spend a month or two in it would be as great a punishment as could be inflicted on me."

"What say you then to going out of town, and remaining absent no longer than you feel inclined?"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't do," replied Thompson.

"Why not?"

"Because I should be laughed at on my return, and I never could bear derision."

"Not when the derision comes from men that we ought in our heart to despise?"

"It matters very little who it comes from, if I'm to be made an object of scorn," answered Thompson. "You may think me a great fool for my pains, but a man can't act against his own feelings."

"You seem to forget entirely that by proceeding in a vicious course you are doing yourself the greatest possible injury. A short time since I thought you were an example of steadiness and sobriety; I saw your conduct with pleasure, and, as a reward, intended to have advanced you to a higher position than you at present hold in my employ. Such I assure you Thompson was my design, and you may judge my mortification on discovering that at present it would be impossible to carry my views into effect. Still, however, it is in your power to recover my confidence, and the moment I see symptoms of returning



steadiness I shall not fail to give a substantial token of my satisfaction."

"I'm afraid you can never trust me again."

"Indeed, but I can though, if you will only make an effort to deserve it," answered Mr. Marlow. "You know the folly—to use no harsher term—of intemperance, and surely when a man knows he is doing wrong he must be culpable indeed, if he will not exercise the reason that has been bestowed on him for his guidancee."

"Its all very well to talk of what may be done," exclaimed Thompson, "but when once a man is under such an influence as I am he loses all confidence in himself. Now I know well enough that I am acting wrong, and reproach myself with it almost every hour in the day, and have over and over again vowed to give up drink. But there's always something to prevent my good intention, and at last I begin to see that any further attempt would be useless."

"Then you confess that you have not moral courage to break yourself of a pernicious habit?"

"Why it needs no confession," he replied, "for every day proves that it is so."

"And you are determined not to try any more?"

"I certainly had made up my mind to give up the attempt," answered Thompson, "but there is still one thing that makes me think I ought to try what can be done."

"May I ask what it is that weighs so favourably with you?" inquired Mr. Marlow.

"It is the kindness you have shewn me," returned the other. "The good advice you have just given, proves how much you have my happiness at heart, and I am thinking that it would be most ungrateful on my part were I to make no effort to do as you have said."

"You will make another attempt then?"

"I will; but it must be confessed I have very little confidence in myself, and without that it is impossible for a man to succeed in what he undertakes."

"Try at any rate," answered Mr. Marlow, "and I am in hopes it will

not be in vain. Make a resolution that from this moment you will not enter the doors of a public house, and I believe that before a week is over the temptation will have lost its power."

"Aye, but for a time only, I am afraid."

"Nay, if you are timid about it, the attempt will be almost sure to fail," answered Mr. Marlow. "You must go to work with firmness and determination; strong in a good cause, and looking forward to the approbation of all good men."

"But I shall also have to look forward to the laughter of all my old companions."

"What need will there be to mind their laughter when you know the seofers to be worthless?" Besides, their derision will soon be at an end when they see that you are firm and steadfast in your resolution to avoid the quicksands to which they would lead you. In a short time too, the laugh will be set aside, for then will be seen the advantages arising from sobriety and good conduct."

"Perhaps it may be so," returned Thompson after a pause, "and I begin to think it will be better for a few people to have the laugh at me than that I should for ever forfeit the esteem you have been kind enough to bestow upon me. So I'll make one more trial, and I hope it may prove successful."

"Amen, with all my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Marlow; "but now tell me what you think of my proposition that you retire for a short time into the country."

"I would rather not do that," he replied, "for if I cannot break myself of the habit here, I'm sure there's no chance of my doing so in a dull country life that I have so great an objection to. That would be sure to drive me into company which is the very thing you want me to avoid."

"But here you will be continually tempted by the men who call themselves your friends."

"So I shall, but they'll soon give up if once I can muster resolution enough to go home regularly as soon as my business is over."

"At any rate," observed Mr. Marlow, "you must remember that they will have



more reason for laughter if you tamely submit to follow their bad advice. Depend upon it, my dear fellow, these men are your worst enemies, and yet how blindly have you submitted to be led by them into a labyrinth from which you now find it so difficult to extricate yourself."

"I have indeed been a foolish fellow," he replied, "but when a man once suffers a love of tippling to get the better of him there's no saying what folly he may not be guilty of. Though I knew the probable consequences I suffered myself to be led on till at length I hardly cared whether you discharged me from your employment or not."

"Did you never reflect then upon the misery that must follow your discharge?"

"Not very often, it must be confessed," replied Thompson, "for my companions took care to tell me that my dismissal would matter very little, since there were plenty of other situations to be had even if I lost this one."

"And you believed them, though your own sense must have told you that, with the character of a drunkard, no person would be mad enough to take you into his employ?"

"The truth is I never gave myself the trouble to think about the matter," answered Thompson.

"So much the worse, for had you done that, a vast deal of mischief would have been prevented. However, we will have done with the past and look forward to the future, which, I am inclined to think, will make amends for all the folly that has been committed. Become sober and steady, my dear fellow, and you shall find in me a fast friend, who will not fail to render you all the service in his power."

"But you can never esteem me again, after having once so much deceived you."

"Study to deserve my esteem, and rely upon it, Thompson, it shall not be wanting."

"I'll try to do so at any rate."

"Do that," answered Mr. Marlow, "and you will have achieved a complete victory over your unfortunate predilection. It only requires a moderate effort, together with a little resolution, and you will soon become all that I am

anxious to see you; a man happy, not only in his own esteem, but in that of all good men."

"How could I have been such a fool as not to have thought of this before?" exclaimed Thompson. "And yet I have thought of it too—often thought of it, but wanted the resolution to make an attempt that I believed was useless."

"That is by no means an uncommon circumstance," observed the other, "for thousands of people, besides yourself, have fallen into the same fatal error. Men know not their power, but suffer themselves to sink for want of making the necessary exertion to overcome the evil propensities to which they are addicted. You, however, I hope, will not be among them, for, being once roused to a sense of your danger, it would be strange indeed, if you did not make an effort to avert it."

"I will, I will," exclaimed Thompson. "You have often been kind to me, Mr. Marlow, very often, and I feel that I have never done anything to deserve it; but you have once more opened my eyes to the danger I was running into, and you shall see that I will not disregard good advice."

"Well, my good fellow, I believe you are sincere, and will wait with confidence to see the result of this conversation. Reflect well upon what I have said, keep your promise of amendment, and when I see that it is based upon a firm foundation I will immediately bestow upon you a situation that will be more liberally rewarded."

Mr. Marlow then left him, and Thompson applied himself to his duties with more zeal than he had done for a long time past. He had been much moved by the good advice of the man whose kindness he had so abused, and in his own mind resolved that no persuasion should ever again induce him to enter a public-house. He believed himself firm in this determination, and the thought of it afforded him no little pleasure, for alas! at that moment he knew not that one of his pretended friends was even then plotting to overturn all the good resolutions he had formed.

This man was Thomas Daly,—alias "Lushy Tom," who had once been in the employ of Mr. Marlow and his partner, but who some time since had been dis-



charged on account of his repeated acts of drunkenness. As ill luck would have it he happened to enter the warehouse while the above conversation was going on, and as he was not perceived he slipped himself behind a heap of packages, where he could hear all that was going on without fear of a discovery. At length when Mr. Marlow went away he came forth from his place of concealment, and clapping Thompson on the shoulder, exclaimed with a sneer,—

"Holloa, old boy! so you are going to cut our society, are you? We are not good enough it seems, and you must needs shuffle off our connexion because yonder canting fool chooses to fancy that a friendly glass or two makes a man what he ought not to be."

"How do you know all this?" asked Thompson with surprise.

"How do I know it? Why by making use of my ears to be sure."

"You have been listening then to our conversation?"

"Of course I have, and what I heard has given me no very good opinion of you, so that's all about it."

"I said nothing that I've any reason to be ashamed of."

"So you may think," exclaimed Daly, "but I may be allowed to have a different opinion I suppose. Of course it's nothing to speak against your old friends."

"I said nothing whatever against them."

"Yes you did, and what's worse you suffered *him* to say just what he liked without once taking our part. But never mind, I don't want to quarrel with you Joe, so here's my hand if you'll promise not to do as that twaddler wants you."

"He only asked me to give up drinking."

"I know what he asked you to do," answered Daly, "and I heard you, like a fool as you are, promise to be a better boy in future. But you sha'n't be such a precious milksop, old fellow, so don't believe it."

"Who is to hinder me from following what I believe to be good advice?" demanded Thompson.

"Why all your old companions to be sure."

"They shall not force me against my will."

"Don't make too sure about that," replied the profligate, "for as the governor said just now, a man don't know what he can do till he tries. However, there'll be no force wanted, for you were always a trump, and I know won't refuse to meet me, and Charley Meeson, and two or three others to night at the Three Compasses."

"Indeed, but I intend to go home early."

"Very well, and what's to hinder your going home early?" demanded Daly. "We only want you to spend just half an hour with us, and then we'll part from each other as sober as so many judges."

"Do we ever part so?" asked Thompson.

"Not very often, I must confess," laughed the other, "but we shall do it this once, I promise you, so you must come and spend a jolly hour or two with us."

"Now it's no use asking me, Tom," he replied, "for I have given my word to the governor and it would be too bad to break it immediately afterwards."

"Psha!" exclaimed Daly, "what a fuss you are making about nothing. Promises are not always kept, and what's more he had no right to preach to you at all about the matter. You should have told him to mind his own business, and leave you to manage your own."

"If I had he would have taken me at my word, and sent me to the right about in no time."

"What of that, you could easily have got in somewhere else," exclaimed Daly.

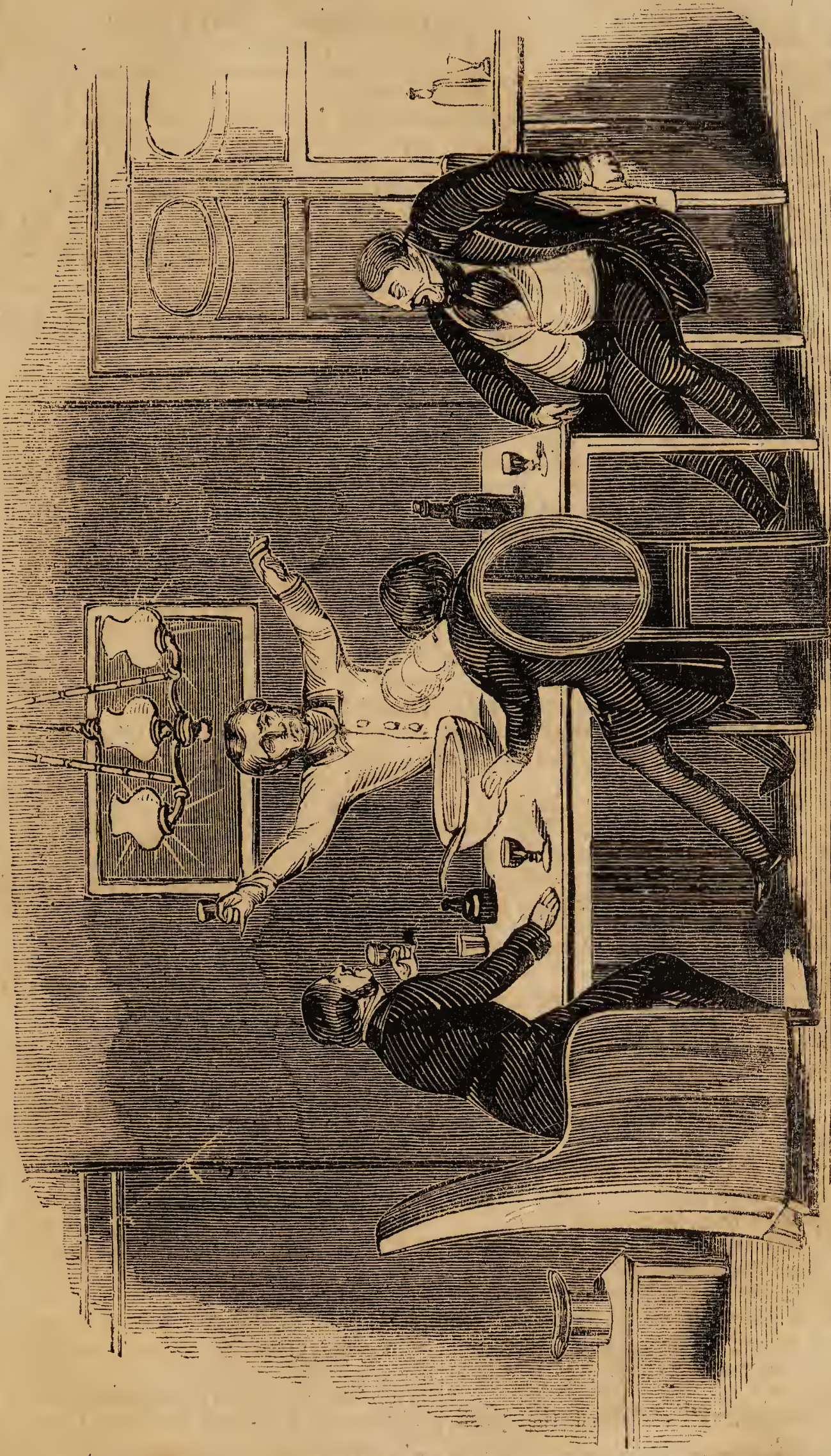
"I'm not quite sure about that," answered the other, "for I can't forget how long I was doing nothing the last time I was discharged. For years I was crawling about without anything to do, and at length, I should have died in a workhouse, but for the kindness of the man whose advice you now want me to set at nought."

"And so because he did a little civility, you consider yourself bound to bow and cringe to him?"

"I never bow nor cringe to any man," answered Thompson; "but I have still some feeling of gratitude left in my heart,



# THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





and that teaches me to respect the counsel of any one that has shown himself to be my friend."

"Then I suppose you mean by that, Joe, that you don't mean to join us to-night?"

"I would much rather not, my boy."

"Well, then," he exclaimed, "I would much rather that you do so, one word for all, we'll take no denial. Come, come, I see you are not going to stand upon trifles when we have made up our minds to hear a song from you, for you have the prettiest voice among all our acquaintance, and we shall be very much disappointed if you don't come."

"I wish I had never been able to sing."

"And why does such a foolish thought enter your head?"

"Because it has often led me into company when I should have gone quietly home," he replied. "People flattered me into a belief that I was an excellent singer, and there's something so delightful in being praised, that —"

"You used to go into company for the sake of hearing it."

"Exactly so, and the consequence was that I in time got turned away from my situation, and for years afterwards was starving about the streets."

"Well, my boy, that's not likely to be the case again," exclaimed Daly, "for the governor needn't know of your meeting us just for this once, and nobody will ever ask you to join us again if you would rather not."

"Do you promise that?" asked Thompson.

"Why to be sure I do, and I mean to keep my word too."

"Well then, on that condition, I don't know but I will look in and spend an hour with you."

"You know the place of course, Joe?"

"Oh, yes, the old house where we have so often met before. But remember, after to-night I'll not go out, let who may ask me, so look upon that as my firm determination."

"As you please about that," answered Daly, "for I never like persuading a man against his inclination."

"And yet you have just now been doing so."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the profligate,

laughing, "why I saw all the time that you meant to come. You only wanted a little coaxing just to make it appear that your company is very particularly agreeable. But never mind, you've given your word, and we shall expect to see you."

"Certainly," he replied, and then checking himself, added, "that is if I can go without Mr. Marlow knowing of it."

"How can he be any the wiser?" demanded Daly. "You wouldn't be fool enough to tell him, and as he can't guess it, you may make up your mind that the thing will be kept close and snug. Besides, are you such a child as to be afraid of its being known that you spent an hour or two with a friend after your day's work was at an end?"

"Its not that," he replied, "but Mr. Marlow has an objection to public houses, and is determined not to keep any one in his employ after he finds out that they give way to tippling."

"And yet I remember the time when he was as great a drunkard as could be found if you was to search London through."

"He acknowledges that," replied Thompson, "but then you see he has reformed since then, and through it has been able to rise to what he now is. Most people, he says, might do better if it wasn't their own fault, and for that reason he wants people to leave off drinking."

"And to turn teetotalers like himself."

"That's just it," exclaimed Thompson; "but we mustn't laugh at the teetotalers either, for though I am not one myself, I can see that they are doing a great deal of good."

"I thought you was once persuaded to take the pledge?"

"So I was, but was foolish enough to break it, and ever since that time I've been sotting away my earnings instead of going home to bed that I might wake in the morning refreshed and ready for business. The consequence is that I come half muddled to my work, and am unable to do anything till I've had beer or a glass or two of spirits to set me going. This the governor knows, and he has told me of it two or three times, but from what he said just now I can



find that if I don't mind what I'm about my situation here will soon be given to somebody else."

"Well then you must be the more careful not to let him know when you have had a little drop too much," observed Daly. "But I cannot stay here any longer, old fellow, lest the governor should see me, so good bye, and remember we shall expect to meet you to-night as soon as you've done here."

Thompson promised to keep his word, and a few hours afterwards saw him surrounded by the very men whom he ought to have most carefully avoided. at first he was very moderate in what he drank, but after a couple of glasses of liquor had been drank, he began to grow careless about going home just then, for the room was full of people, and there was a great deal of singing, and what pleased him most of all was that his own songs went off with tumultuous applause. Thus one thing or another kept him till nearly three o'clock in the morning, by which time he was so far incapable of taking care of himself that a couple of his friends had to see him safely to his own door. But this was not the worst of it, for when he ought to have got up he felt too ill to move. His pulse beat quickly—his blood was fevered, and there were all the symptoms of a serious illness coming on. That day, of course, he was not able to go to business, nor could he apologize for his absence. The next day, however, he felt better, and went as usual, but had to invent a paltry excuse, or rather, a lie, to account for not having made his appearance on the previous morning. Mr. Marlow shook his head, for he pretty well guessed how it was, and when they were next alone together, once more earnestly entreated him to break himself of so degrading a habit.

Thompson promised to do so, but unfortunately he had not firmness enough to keep his word, for the same evening he was again in the same company, the same late hour was kept, and in the same way he was taken home by his companions. His absence from business now became more frequent, and his example became so pernicious that his employer, however unwillingly, saw

that after all his attempts he should be obliged to dismiss him from his service. As a last resource he one day told Thompson that he should be compelled to do so unless a great change took place in his conduct, but the hint had no other effect than to draw forth an insolent rejoinder, and at night the infatuated man joined his companions as usual, and, if possible, became more intoxicated than he had ever been before.

The patience of Mr. Marlow being thus worn out, he saw plainly enough that no alternative remained but to rid himself of a man who had now become a perfect annoyance. It vexed him to be obliged to do so, and on joining his family on that same evening, it was observed that he appeared more disturbed than usual.

"Why, what in the name of wonder is the matter with you this evening?" demanded Mrs. Marlow, at length breaking the silence. "You are generally so cheerful Frederick, and yet to night you make us all as melancholy as possible by sitting there and not speaking a word to any of us."

"Can't you guess what I am thinking about?" he asked.

"Indeed I cannot," she replied, "unless it is of that foolish fellow Thompson, and he is scarcely worth a thought now that he has turned out such a confirmed drunkard again."

"Well," he replied, "it was of him I was thinking, and the cause of my feeling so dull was the thought that after all my attempts to reform him I shall be obliged to dismiss him. He has been going on badly enough as it is, but Heaven knows what will become of the wretched man when he has no longer the means of earning a living."

"It's easy enough to see," answered Mrs. Marlow, "that he must again come to the workhouse."

"Which, by the bye, he entertains the greatest horror of."

"One would hardly suppose he ever gives it a thought," observed Frank Marlow, "or he would not so madly pursue a course that must lead to his destruction. However, had as his conduct has been lately, I do not yet quite despair of seeing him come once more to his senses."



"So I once thought myself," returned his father, "but after remonstrating with him so severely as I have, I now begin to fear there is not a chance of his reformation. In short, he has been seen several times of late with that reprobate Thomas Daly, who has the reputation of being a confirmed drunkard, and who appears to have succeeded in making Thompson as dissipated and worthless as he is himself."

"Still," exclaimed Frank, "I have a notion that the foolish fellow will not be quite deaf to the voice of reason, if he can once be brought to reflect upon the certain ruin into which he is plunging himself. Now, I believe I possess as much power over him as any one, and with your leave will go in search of him, and try what can be done towards rousing him to a sense of the danger he is in."

"You go in search of him!" cried his mother, with alarm; "why you will find him sitting with his companions in some of the low public-houses he is so fond of frequenting."

"That's just what I expect," answered the young man; "and knowing pretty well where to light upon him, I will go this very night and see what can be done towards rescuing the unfortunate fellow from the evil hands he has fallen into."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "I shall raise no objection to your going, as you have said, Frank;" but I would have you consider first the unpleasant nature of the business you are taking upon yourself. He and his companions will only laugh at your well-intended remonstrances, and you may take my word for it, they will never suffer Thompson to follow any other counsel than what they have given him."

"At all events you have no objection to my trying?"

"Certainly not, my dear boy," answered his father, "for it is our duty to check the progress of evil, and whilst even the faintest chance remains of recalling this unfortunate man to reason, I, for one, will throw no obstacle in your way. Pursue whatever course you think best, and should you succeed, your best reward will be in the approbation of your own conscience."

"In that case I'll do as I said just now; see him this very night, and point out the misery that must be his lot unless he immediately dismisses from him for ever, the evil companions who are urging him on to his own downfall. He has a fair share of good sense, and I believe it only wants the warning voice of some sincere friend to awaken him from the fatal dream which has so stupified him."

"Well, Frank," exclaimed his father, "you have more confidence in this fresh attempt of yours than I have, yet I will not say a word to damp an endeavour which is so creditable to you. Go, my dear fellow, seek this besotted man in the den he is so fond of, and use all your best arguments to show him the consequences he is bringing on himself. Say I will give him one more week's trial, and that if his conduct proves satisfactory, I will continue him in my employ so long as he is steady; but if, on the other hand, he shows no symptoms of amendment, I must then abandon him to his fate, however unwilling I may be to cast him forth upon the world."

Frank rose from his seat, and taking up his hat, proceeded to the place where he was pretty sure of meeting with the man he was seeking.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE TAP-ROOM AND ITS OCCUPANTS;  
FRIENDLY ADVICE FAILS THROUGH  
THE INFLUENCE OF EVIL COUNSELS.

WHILST his real friends were expressing so lively and interest in behalf of Joe Thompson, his false ones were doing all in their power to confirm him in the mischievous course towards which they had again drawn him. At the very time when the Marlow family were considering how he might be preserved from ruin; the person for whom they felt so deeply interested was drinking with his low, dissipated companion, in the tap-room of the public-house where Frank Marlow expected he should be able to find him. Some were already in a state of filthy intoxication; others, who were not quite so bad, but fast approaching that way, were roaring



forth songs of the most demoralizing description, and others again were dancing to the discordant sounds of a fiddle that an itinerant musician was playing in one corner of the room. On a settle near the fire were seated Joe Thompson and his chosen comrade Daly; both of them had been drinking pretty deeply, but were not yet so intoxicated as the depraved persons by whom they were surrounded. The noise and confusion evidently annoyed them, and when at last, the landlord came in, and turned out some of the most unruly of his customers, the two friends resumed the conversation which had been broken off, when they could no longer hear each other speak.

"And so," said Daly, "the governor has been giving you a lecture has he? He thinks it a great crime for a fellow to enjoy himself after his work is done, and yet the time was when Fred Marlow could take his pint and his glass as well as another."

"So he could," returned Thompson, "and he spoke of it to me only this very day; but then he takes credit to himself for having broken himself of the habit, and would fain persuade me that I could get on in the world as well as he has if I would but break myself of the habit of drinking intoxicating liquors."

"Psha! if a man works hard he must drink," exclaimed the other."

"That's just what I say; but the governor won't have it, and he says, if every working man would only be persuaded to take the pledge, there wouldn't be a tenth part of the crime that is now committed. I couldn't make any reply to that, but I told him I had tried to break myself of the habit, and as my resolution hadn't held good, it was no use for him to be continually preaching against my enjoying myself."

"Good! and what did he say to that, old fellow?"

"Why, he told me that I mistook false enjoyments for real ones, and wanted to know whether I didn't feel happier in mind, and better in spirits, all the time that I kept sober. I told him it might be so, but I had tried steadiness quite long enough, and that now I intended to enjoy myself as long as I'm able, and to seek my friends, as I have a

right to do, after the business of the day is over."

"And what did he say to that, old fellow?"

"He seemed vexed enough," answered Thompson, "and said, that, though unwilling to throw me upon the world again, he should be obliged to dismiss me from his service unless I set a better example to the other people in his employment."

"Well, and you had an answer for him of course?"

"Yes, I told him there was plenty of other places to be had, so he might discharge me as soon as he pleased."

"That was showing the right sort of spirit," exclaimed Tom Daily. "If one master won't have you, another will, so never mind being sent away rather than submit to be talked to and lectured as if you were a school-boy. You suit him well enough, I'll be bound, so never fear that he'll send you about your business when he would be obliged to take a stranger in your place."

"I rather think you wrong there, old fellow," exclaimed Thompson, "for whenever the governor says a thing he sticks to it, however much it may be against himself to do so. But never mind, let him discharge me soon as he likes; he shall see that I'll never humble to him—no, not even if I was to go back to the workhouse he took me out of."

"What made him so soft-hearted towards you?"

"I don't know how it was," answered Thompson; "but to give the devil his due, it must be owned that he is a good sort of fellow, if he was'n't so fond of meddling with other people's business, I told him as much indeed, and he seemed to be uncommonly put out about it, for he said that if he had interfered in my case it was to save me from the ruin that he saw was staring me in the face."

"Ha! ha! ha!—as if a man was obliged to be ruined through enjoying himself of an evening, as you and I are now doing."

"He wonders what pleasure people can find in sitting about in public-houses," answered Thompson, and was kind enough to tell me that the money spent in such places was worse than thrown away. I almost laughed in his face, but as I dare say it was well meant, I merely



told him that the money I earned by my labour was my own, and that nobody had anything to do with how I got rid of it. That was a bit of a poser to him, for he turned upon his heel, telling me that unless I altered my conduct he should be obliged to dismiss me."

"Which as a matter of course you care nothing about?"

"As a proof that I didn't," replied Thompson, "I came here as soon as ever the warehouse was closed for the night. But I say," he added in a whisper, "I'll be hanged if there aint the young master looking for me? I wonder what the devil he has taken the trouble to follow me here for?"

"Oh, no doubt he has been sent here as a spy by his father."

"No, no, not he," exclaimed the other, "Frank Marlow aint that sort of fellow either. for he and I have always been good friends, and I believe he would do anything if he could to make it all right between me and his father. But he sees me and is coming this way, so, whatever message he may have to deliver hold your tongue, for I should soon ride rusty if anything was said to affront him."

"Thompson," said the young man, who had by this time approached, "I have something particuar to say if you will just step out of doors with me for a few minutes."

"Why can't you say it to me here, Master Frank?"

"Because this is no place to speak about private matters," he replied, "besides I have an utter aversion to all public houses, and nothing should have induced me to come here but that I want to speak to you about something that concerns your future prospects."

"Humph! you have been sent here by your father, I suppose?"

"My father knows that I have come," replied Frank, but the act itself was a perfectly voluntary one on my part, so don't refuse me a few minutes conversation, for you know not now much may depend on it."

"Ah," exclaimed Tom Daly, "if the young gentleman is afraid of my hearing anything he has got to say, you had better both go over to the table opposite. There's no one sitting there, and you can chat there without being overheard,

for I dare say no one here wants to know your business."

This hint was taken, and having seated themselves at the table Frank Marlow said in a whisper:—

"Who is that person that spoke to us just now?"

"His name is Daly; an old acquaintance of mine, and a very good sort of chap he is, though your father has taken it into his head that he leads me astray."

"He seems to be a dissipated sort of fellow, Thompson."

"Oh, you musn't take people by their look," answered the other, "like most other folks, he enjoys himself when he can, and for my own part I see no great harm in a man sitting down with his friends after his day's work is over."

"But I'm afraid the company to be met with in these places is not of that kind that decent people should associate with."

"Ah! there it is," exclaimed Thompson, "you have the same sort of prejudices as your father, and would have a fellow mope himself to death rather than mix with the world. Now you see we are all quiet enough here, and I should like to know what great harm there can be in this place any more than there is in any other."

"Why it's quiet enough just now," returned Frank, "but when I first arrived at the house there was a terrible disturbance going on, and the landlord was obliged to turn several persons out. all of whom seemed maddened with drink."

"Oh! there was a bit of a row to be sure," answered the other, "but neither Tom Daly nor I had anything to do with it, and as the place has been cleared of all the noisy customers there's nothing to find fault with. However, you have something to say to me it seems, so out with it at once, Master Frank, and as it is dry work to be sitting over empty pewter pots, suppose you call for some beer that we may——"

"Don't ask me to do that which you know I shall refuse," exclaimed Frank. "What I have to say will soon be over and I do hope you are not so deaf to reason as to refuse the favour I have come to ask."



"Why you know I'll not refuse any thing in reason."

"Then leave this place with me, and promise never to enter a public-house again."

"Your father told you to come on this errand, eh?"

"He gave me no hint of the kind, though he knows I have come here, and the purpose for which the visit is paid."

"I understand; you have heard him say something and want to put me upon my guard?"

"True, he is very angry at your having turned a deaf ear to all his remonstrances, and finding that you are determined to persist in your intemperate habits, has determined, though much against his inclination, to dismiss you from his service."

"Very well," replied Thompson; "if he can do without me, I dare say I can manage without his assistance. But it aint exactly the thing though to turn me away for no other reason than that I won't give way to his whims and fancies."

"It is not upon such slight ground as you imagine," exclaimed Frank. "He sees that his business is not so well performed by men who come in the morning with their heads muddled by the effects of the overnight's intoxication. He knows, too, that an habitual drunkard is not to be depended on, and is determined to have no one in his employment who gives way to drinking, and company."

"Then all I know about it is that he'll be likely to change his men very often," exclaimed Thompson. "Besides, what great harm is there in my sitting here till its time to go home?"

"Take my word for it there is a great deal of harm," replied the young man. "you have yourself suffered much from it, and surely experience should by this time have taught you that the sober, steady man, always succeeds better in the world than those who waste their time and money, in places of this description; I am a mere boy to you, Thompson, but I speak with all sincerity, and my purpose being a good one, I do sincerely hope you will form a better resolution before it is too late."

"Upon my life, young gentleman, I

cant see what right you have to lecture me in this manner. Your father did the same only this very day, and I put up with it pretty quietly, because we have been old acquaintances, but it don't follow that I'm to put up with the same thing from his son."

"I see you are offended with me," exclaimed Frank Marlow, "but a moments consideration will convince you that I came here with the kindest intentions towards yourself. I know my father's determination, and would give you a caution before it is too late."

"He can do nothing more than discharge me from his servicee."

"And what are you to do when thrown out of a situation," asked the youth, "with the character of being a sot you will not soon obtain another situation, and the consequences must be such as I am afraid to think of."

"I know what you are hinting about," exclaimed Thompson, "you fancy I must go into the workhouse again, but there you are mistaken, for rather than do that I would beg my bread in the street, aye, or do anything else to keep myself from becoming a parish pauper."

"And yet," said Frank, "how easily you might avoid the evils you are threatened with."

"You would persuade me to give up all my enjoyments."

"I wish to convince you that there are rational enjoyments if you only make up your mind to avoid your present associates, do that, and my father will rejoice in keeping you in your present employment."

"Psha! why should I yield to the advice of a man because he happens to be my master?" demanded Thompson.

"Aye, why indeed," demanded one of a group of fellows who had by this time gathered round them. "This young chap seems inclined to give his advice gratis, so, as he has no business here, I for one should like to show him the nearest way out of the door."

Saying this he laid his hand upon Frank's shoulder and was about to suit the action to the word when Thompson springing up, with one blow sent the fellow reeling to the other end of the room. A row was about to commence, but the landlord immediately interfered



and Frank having been prevailed upon to make the best of his way out of the house, the others were detained long enough to let him get clear away, and then were dismissed with very little ceremony. Thompson and Daly were the last to leave, and the latter soon began to inquire what business had induced young Marlow to come in search of him.

"Why, the truth is," replied Thompson, "the young fellow has always been partial to me, and happening to hear that his father means to dispense with my services, he came to persuade me against spending my evenings out quite so much as I have been in the habit of doing."

"It would be much better for him to mind his own business, I'm thinking," growled the other.

"Perhaps so," returned Thompson; "but when I know that he has done all this to serve me, I can't help being grateful for it."

"And so you are going to follow his advice, eh?"

"No, I'm not," answered Thompson, "and so I told him; but I couldn't be angry with a young fellow who has always been my friend, and has many a time made excuses for me when his father has been angry."

"Excuses! was there any occasion for 'em when every one has a right to be his own master after the day's business is over? But I see how it is, this Marlow thinks too much of himself since he has been getting on in the world, and fancies he has a right to lord it over such poor devils as you and I, because we have been less fortunate."

"No, no, you are wrong there, Tom," answered his friend; "the governor ain't a bad sort of chap, but somehow or another he has taken it into his head that drinking is the root of all mischief, and he would make everybody else believe the same sort of thing. Now for my own part I never cared about his giving a little bit of advice now and then, because I know it went in at one ear and out of the other, but when he comes to threaten me with dismissal from his service I think its high time to let him know that there's more situations than his to be got, and that I can part from

him with as little regret as he does from me."

"Then why don't you give him warning, my boy?"

"I've thought of doing so a good many times," replied Thompson, "but somehow when I've been going to speak the words seemed to stick in my throat. What reason there was for it I don't know, unless it was a sort of notion running in my mind that another situation might not be found quite so easily as I had imagined."

"But there's always plenty of ways of picking up a living."

"You have thrown out hints of that kind before," said Thompson, looking earnestly into his countenance. "You say men may live without hard work, and hang me if I haven't sometimes thought you meant to persuade me to take dishonest courses for a livelihood!"

"And what if I did hint such a thing?" demanded the other. "Suppose now no work was to be got, would you rather starve than put out your hand for any of the little waifs and strays that might come within your reach?"

"I don't know what hunger might drive me to," exclaimed Thompson; "but at present I do not think I should be induced to steal while there was a chance of getting into another situation."

"Then, if it will be any comfort to you to know it," returned Tom Daly, with a sneer, "I don't think there's the smallest chance of your ever getting another situation if ever you should loose your present one."

"And yet you said just now there were plenty of others to be got."

"I know I did," he replied, "but that was only because there were so many people about that I didn't like to speak my mind too freely. However, the truth of it is, when a man is discharged through drunkenness he has little chance of getting another situation, and in the end he's obliged to turn thief rather than go into the workhouse, or perish in the streets through starvation."

"You think then, that I would do the same thing?"

"Upon my life I do," replied Daly,



THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





"for experience has always shown me that hunger will drive people to extremities sooner than anything else, and as you said not long since that you would never become a pauper upon the parish, I know very well what else must happen."

"Do you get your living by thieving?" asked Thompson.

"Why I won't deny doing a little in that way whenever I have an opportunity," replied the other; "and it's not to be much wondered at either, for no one will give me employment, because I left my last situation through being too fond of drinking and company. So you see as the world drove me to it, I now live upon the world in the best way I can, and if people find fault with me for it, why I have only to tell them that no one would give me work, and as I am not inclined to starve, I took to helping myself to what did not belong to me."

"Have you never been caught at it?" asked Thompson.

"No, I have been lucky enough to escape so far, but I suppose my turn will come by and by as it does to most of us."

"And you are not afraid of the punishment that will follow?"

"Not I," he replied, "or I should have given up the game long ago. The truth is, however, that I must either run the risk or bury myself in a workhouse, for I don't choose to beg whilst anything better is to be done; I'll keep my head above water as long as I'm able, and when it comes to my turn to be grabbed I'll suffer the imprisonment like a martyr, and when my time is out, begin business again with as much spirit as if nothing had happened. So now, old boy, you know more of me than you ever did before, and you have only got to turn the matter over in your mind against we next meet, when you'll perhaps tell me what you mean to do when the governor has sent you about your business."

"He'll not do so, I hope," replied Thompson, thoughtfully.

"Yet he has said you shall leave him in a week."

"Aye, but that was if I didn't give up the habits that he has spoken to me so much about."

"And so you mean to knock under to him, I suppose?"

"Not a bit of it," replied Thompson, stung by the sneer with which this was accompanied. "I'll not be dictated to by a man that was not long ago no more than my own equal but; I will be more cautious; drink rather less than I have been used to do, and find my way to business in the morning as soon as the warehouse is open. That ought to satisfy Mr. Marlow, I should think, and if it don't why then I suppose we must part after all."

"Humph! you begin to give way; Joe, as soon as you think he is in earnest about your leaving?"

"The long and short of it is, Daly, that I have no fancy either for turning thief or going to the parish union. One I have had quite enough of, and the other is a thing that I have always set my face against."

"But I have heard that you were a thief once."

"And you heard quite right," answered Thompson, "I did for a time live by dishonesty, but a long illness cured me of that, and after recovering I made up my mind never to carry on the old game again. So far I've kept to my promise, and I fancy nothing will ever make me break it."

"Then I was a fool to place myself at the mercy of a fellow that may go and inform against me."

"No, no, Tom, you have nothing to fear of me on that score," replied the other. "I may not like your ways, but hang me if I open my lips to injure a man that has by an accident thrown himself into my power."

"Do you mean to swear that?"

"I do."

"Then enough has been said upon that subject; so now tell me what you intend to do with Mr. Marlow."

"I don't know at present," answered Thompson, "but when I have seen him to-morrow I shall be better able to judge how to act. If he should speak to me sharply I shall most likely ride rusty, and leave him at a moment's notice; but if he chooses to wait patiently to see how I am going to act, it is more likely than not that I shall follow the advice that he has so often given me."



"What! do you think of giving up your old friends?"

"No, I shall not exactly do that," replied Thompson, "but I'll see what good can be done by keeping better hours in future. If that satisfies Mr. Marlow its all well and good, but he must not expect me to give up my old habits and acquaintances merely because he dont happen to like them."

"Then why give way to him at all, old boy?"

"Well I dont think there's another soul in the world that could have persuaded me but Frank Marlow," replied Thompson. "That youngster has always been my friend when most I wanted one, and his hunting me out to night in a public-house is a proof that he wants to get me into favour with his father again."

"Perhaps so," answered the other, "but in my opinion it would be much better for him if he would mind his own business. You are old enough to judge for yourself I should think, and it looks like presumption for a youngster like that to come and lecture a chap that dont stand in need of advice."

"Bnt he heard his father say that he must get rid of me if I didn't alter my goings on."

"And what need you care for his sending you away?" demanded Tom Daly. "You are of some use in the establishment, I suppose, or else he wouldn't have taken you on, and as you earn your money I don't see that there's much favour done either on one side or the other. And I'll tell you what it is, Joe, I don't half like that young fellow coming after us to night, for it looks as if there were unpleasant suspicions in the mind of Mr. Marlow, that he sent his son to worm out what you do with yourself of an evening."

"Frank turn a spy upon me!" exclaimed the other. "No, no, he's too good a fellow for that, and had no other motive for coming than to try whether he could persuade me to stick to business a little more regularly."

"You believe that, do you?" exclaimed Tom Daly.

"I'm sure of it," answered the other, "and nothing will ever make me believe that the young master would ever be guilty of a mean or paltry action."

"But what is it to him if you like to spend an hour or two of an evening among your friends?"

"Why I don't suppose he thinks he has any business with it," replied Thompson; "but he has so often heard his father speak about John Ashman and the fate of his family that I dare say the young man thinks the bottle is at the bottom of every mischief."

"And yet I remember the time when Marlow could take his drops with any one."

"So do I," answered the other, "but somehow he managed to break himself of the habit, and see how he has got on in the world ever since. Why he's making money like dirt, and if he goes on as he does now for a few years longer, he'll be one of the richest tradesmen in London."

"And then I suppose he'll be lord mayor?"

"I don't know how that may be," answered Thompson; "but I heard some people say in our warehouse the other day, that the alderman of the ward is very ill, and if he dies it is intended to propose Mr. Marlow in his place; and there's no doubt about his being elected too, for he's a great favourite, and it's not expected that any one would oppose him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Daly, "a fine alderman a teetotaler will make, won't he?"

"Why I think he'll be about the first they've ever had," replied the other. "But I don't see that that will matter very much, for he must have the usual feasting if he should ever come to be lord mayor, and if he don't choose to drink anything himself, why there'll be plenty of his guests that will. But I say Tom, a few years ago who would ever have thought of seeing him rank among the first citizens of London?"

"Nobody ever expected it of course," returned the other, "however, there's no accounting for the luck of some people and as for Fred Marlow, as we used to call him, I don't know how he has managed to get on so, unless he has cheated his customers while he was pretending to be an honest straight-forward tradesman."

"I don't believe he ever cheated any body in his life."



"At any rate, if he did, he was hardly fool enough to tell you so," exclaimed Daly. "But how is it, old fellow, that you take his part through thick and thin when you know he is going to turn you out of your situation?"

"I'm not quite sure of his sending me away."

"What! do you mean to stay with him whether he likes it or not?" exclaimed Tom Daly.

"That's hardly likely," answered the other; "but perhaps the hint given me by Mr. Frank, just now, may not have been thrown away. There's time enough yet to set myself all right again, and I believe, if I make up my mind to it, I can give up drink as easily as I did once before."

"Well!" exclaimed Daly, "hang me if I didn't expect it would come to this after all."

"Come to what?"

"Why that you would be fool enough to let that young fellow talk you over to his own way of thinking."

"You are wrong there, Tom, for you have had more to do with it than anybody else."

"I have! Why I have said everything I could against it."

"That's all true enough," answered Thompson, "but when you hinted just now that I might yet be obliged to thief for my living, I then saw that I must either stop my folly at once, or make up my mind to lose my character altogether."

"Ah! that's to be the sort of caper, is it?"

"Yes Tom, I think I shall begin from this moment to leave off going to public houses."

"Then I see now what a precious fool I've been for opening my mind to you so freely just now."

"You needn't be afraid of my saying anything that will harm you," replied Thompson. "The secret shall go no further; but mind, you and I had better see each other as little as possible from this time, for as we don't altogether agree in our opinions the best way will be to part before we have a quarrel."

"With all my heart," exclaimed the other; "we'll each follow our own notions, you go your way and I'll go mine. but mark my words old fellow,

temperance and you won't agree very long together, and when you get tired of it, come to me and I'll put you in a way to get a living without having to fag for it as if you were born for slavery."

Thrusting his hands into his breeches pockets, he turned muttering away. Thompson stood looking after him for a minute or two, and then moved towards home, resolving in his own mind to reform his habits before it was too late.

## CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER ADVANCE IN THE CAREER OF  
FREDERICK MARLOW. — PROSPECTS  
OF A SPEEDY MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCE.

FROM a portion of the preceding conversation the reader has been prepared to learn that new honours awaited the industrious tradesman. In short, a vacancy having occurred, the aldermanic gown was conferred upon Mr. Marlow, as a person in every way to be trusted with the important duties attached to office. The honour was not sought for, but was bestowed upon him by his fellow citizens as a mark of the high esteem in which he was held by them. It was not, however, without some hesitation that he accepted the trust, for he preferred the quiet of private life, and only consented to fill the office from a conviction that it is imperative upon every man to perform even a disagreeable duty, though it may happen to be accompanied by personal inconvenience. In this respect Mrs. Marlow entirely coincided with him.

"I would rather," she said, "this honour had been spared you, my dear, but as it has been conferred you will, of course, not be so ungrateful as to refuse it. It is, however, anything but a gratification to me, for I had looked forward to spending the evening of our days in some country retirement, which, after all, has more charms to quiet people like us, than all the honours that the good people of London can bestow."

"Dear me!" exclaimed her friend, Mrs. Edwards, "is it possible that you and Mr. Marlow don't feel flattered by an honour that so many people anxiously seek after?"



"We feel highly flattered, my dear madam," replied Marlow, "because we know it is a mark of the esteem in which we have been held. I, however, never should have thought of seeking the office, and when some of my neighbours proposed putting me in nomination for it, I most distinctly told them that I should prefer remaining as I was. But it seems they were determined to have their own way, and here am I, one of the Aldermen of London against my will."

"Aye," said Mrs. Edwards, "and when your turn comes, will be Lord Mayor of London. Only think Mrs. Marlow of the the honour that awaits you, when your husband invites the ministers of the crown, and the chief nobility of the land to dine at your own table. Then your health will be proposed by the prime minister, and his lordship, that is your husband, will——"

"You seem to be quite in high spirits my dear Mrs. Edwards at my elevation," interrupted Mr. Marlow, laughing.

"Well, it must be owned I am delighted at it," she replied, "and yet it all seems like a dream, too; for who a few years ago, could have expected to see you rise as you have."

"Ah," exclaimed Marlow, "you allude to the time when I had but one poor garret, and that but scantily furnished with articles of the commonest description. And there I and my family must have remained till this time but for my resolution at last to take the pledge of temperance. It was a love of drink that brought me to the very lowest depths of poverty, but no sooner had I shown an earnest desire to abandon the fatal habit than Mr. Bellamy's confidence in me returned, and from that moment I have been gradually advancing to the position I now hold."

At that juncture a servant came to say that Thompson wished to say a few words to his master if he could conveniently spare a few minutes.

"Tell him to come to me here," replied Marlow, and then leaning to his wife, he added,—"I wonder what the poor fellow can have to say to me, he has been going on more steadily of late, and I hope he has at last made up his mind to join one of our societies, for with all his promises, I can never place

much reliance in him till he has bound himself by a pledge to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors."

"Yet he has been very punctual in his duties here," observed Mrs. Marlow, "at least it is sometime since I have heard those repeated complaints which used at one time to be so frequent. But I hear his footsteps coming up stairs so we shall soon hear from his own lips whether he is quite determined to continue in his present sober course."

"I am quite determined, madam," exclaimed Thompson who, having entered the room had overheard the last few words, "Indeed I have grown so heartily tired of the wild, reckless life I used to lead, that, taking your husband's example, I am now resolved that nothing shall ever again induce me to return to my old habit of intemperance."

"Then why not take the pledge as I have so often urged you," demanded Mr. Marlow.

"I have at length done so," he replied, "for I found that some of my old acquaintances were trying to laugh me out of my determination, and feeling rather distrustful of myself, I last night did what you have so often tried to persuade me to do."

"Good," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "There is now reliance to be placed in you, my dear fellow, and the promise I made to you shall not be forgotten. You shall be immediately removed to the counting-house, where your labour will not be so great whilst you will receive a larger salary for the duties you have to perform. But there is one thing that I must caution you against; avoid all those companions who are likely to ridicule you for the step you have taken, for you may not be able to withstand the jeers of those who would take pleasure in persuading you to break your pledge."

"They would have a hard task to do that," answered Thompson; "for as you have seen I am not to be persuaded when once I have made up my mind to a thing."

"I'm not quite so sure of that, my good fellow," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "for you were easily drawn astray on the last occasion, though you had promised never to enter a public-house again as long as you lived."



"And I should have kept my word," he replied, "but that I was tempted by a man that I thought my friend."

"You mean Thomas Daly, I suppose?"

"I do."

"My son tells me he was with you on the night when he went to try if he could prevail on you to give up the horrible vice of drinking to excess."

"He was with me on that night," replied Thompson.

"And have you ever seen him since?" asked Mr. Marlow.

"Yes, three or four times, but never to drink with him."

"And he, I suppose, goes on just as badly as ever."

"No," answered the other, "he has just recovered from a very serious illness, and, if his own word may be taken for it, he is determined never to drink again."

"With him," observed Mr. Marlow, "I am afraid the resolution is more easily made than kept."

"I don't know how that may be, sir," answered the other, "but he seemed to be sincere enough, and if one thing happens I believe he'll turn out a steady man after all."

"What is it that you allude to Thompson?"

"Why the truth is, he wants to get into a situation."

"Pshaw! who would take into his house a man with such a bad character?"

"Ah! there it is," exclaimed Thompson. "I was afraid that would be the difficulty, for if he can't get employment he'll manage somehow to get drunk, and he'll soon be as bad as ever, through people fancying he is not to be depended upon."

"Supposing you were in business," said Mr. Marlow, "do you think you could place any reliance in such a man?"

"I fancy I could," answered Thompson, with hesitation; "at least I would give him a trial, just to have the comfortable reflection that he was not suffered to go to destruction for the want of one helping hand."

"You came here I dare say to plead for him?"

"To tell you the truth, sir, that is exactly it."

"Do you know whether he is honest and trustworthy?"

"Why, as for that," exclaimed Thompson, "I don't know enough of the man to answer for what his character may be. There was a time, however, when he was said to be not very honest, but he has been at death's door since then, and as he seems to be heartily sorry for his former misdeeds, I have a notion that he will be cautious in his conduct in future."

"If I thought any reliance could be placed in him," observed Mr. Marlow, after a moment's consideration, "I would place him in the situation you are about to vacate."

"Give him a trial, at any rate," interposed Mrs. Marlow, "for if the poor fellow is really sincere in his regret for the past, it may prove the means of saving him from a life of sin and shame in future."

"But I ought first of all to be assured of his honesty."

"His anxious desire to get into employment seems to prove that he is honest," she replied. "At any rate he might be closely watched for a time, which could be done without his being aware of it, and consequently his feelings would not be hurt by any suspicion."

"I will myself undertake to look after him, if he is taken into the house," exclaimed Thompson. "Besides, I might caution him to be guarded in his conduct, and not to get me as well as himself into disgrace after persuading my master to give him the employment he asks for."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "though it seems scarcely prudent to take a stranger into the place, I feel half inclined to give this man a trial. So you may tell him to come to-morrow morning, Thompson, and if his conduct is such as to afford me satisfaction, his situation will be a permanent one."

Having expressed his thanks, Thompson left the room, and Mr. Marlow addressing himself to his wife, said—

"I don't know how it is, my dear, but though I have promised to try this man Daly, I have a suspicion on my mind that his repentance is not so sincere as he would have us believe."



"Do you think he will set our other people a bad example of intemperance?" she asked.

"If that was the worst, it could be easily remedied by discharging him on the first occasion of his breaking out," replied her husband. "But I have worse suspicions respecting him, for in my own mind I feel pretty certain that he has obtained a living by dishonest means."

"Is it possible," she asked, "that Thompson would recommend a man of known bad character?"

"Perhaps in his own anxiety to serve a man that he believed to be sorry for his former evil doings he is too easily prevailed upon to believe that he will offend no more. However, be that as it may, I shall not go from my word; Daly shall have a fair trial, and I will myself keep watch over his actions. If I have wronged him by my suspicions I can easily find the means to recompense him with; but if, on the other hand, I should discover any pilfering going on, I would pursue him to the very utmost, in order to deter others from robbing those who place their trust in them."

The subject was here brought to a conclusion by a loud double knock at the street door, and in a few moments afterwards Mr. Bellamy, the former partner of Marlow, walked into the room. After having congratulated him on the new dignity to which he had been elected by his fellow citizens, he entered upon a few other topics, and then came to the affair which was the immediate cause of his visit.

"I see your daughter is not present," he said, looking round the room.

"She is not at home," answered Mrs. Marlow, "nor do we expect that she will return before to-morrow from a visit that she is paying to a young friend."

"Then I suppose my son John has managed to find out where she is, for I have missed him all day, and expected as a matter of course, to meet with him here, where the source of attraction lies. And that, by the by, brings me to the very point I have been wishing to speak to you about, Marlow. This courting between the young folks has been going on long enough, and I should like to hear if they are likely to settle soon, for

as they seem to be very much attached to each other, the sooner the wedding takes place the better."

"As soon as you please, my my dear sir," replied Mr. Marlow. "Your son mentioned the subject to me the other day, and I then told him that he would find no obstacle in his way whenever he and you chance to propose the day that is to unite our families."

"Suppose we name this day three weeks?"

"With all my heart, if the young folks themselves can complete their arrangements by the time."

"Oh, leave them alone for that," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, laughing. "They will throw no impediment in the way, I'll answer for it; and as for myself, on my return home, I'll call on my solicitor and desire him to draw up the marriage settlements. I hate anything to be long about, and am so anxious in this case, that I am determined there shall be no longer delay in making the young people happy."

"Your son, I suppose, is not aware that you have resolved upon the wedding taking place so soon."

"Not he," exclaimed the old gentleman; but he has always been obedient to the will of his father, and in the present instance there's no reason to fear that he will raise any objections. And as for your daughter, Susan, I suppose she considers that by this time the courtship has been going on quite long enough."

"Their attachment is so warm and sincere," returned Mrs. Marlow, "that there can be no doubt they will both be much gratified when they hear that their immediate nuptials have been determined on. Three weeks will be ample time for preparation, for I believe it is the wish of all the parties connected that the affair shall be celebrated in as quiet a manner as possible."

"Aye, just a few relations and friends," he replied, "for no doubt the young folks will leave town directly after the ceremony, to spend the honeymoon somewhere in the country. At the same time, I intend to pass a few days at Brighton, and you I suppose—but I forgot," he added, checking himself and laughing, "the alderman has now so much business upon his hands



that he has not time to spare, even so much as one day for his own enjoyment."

"It is even so," answered Marlow; "and I feel almost sorry that I have accepted an office that, if I do justice to it, will occupy much of the time which I might otherwise have passed in my own family."

"What! you are sick of your new dignity already?"

"Not sick of it certainly," answered Marlow, "for it was bestowed upon me by my fellow citizens; and what greater gratification can a man feel than when he experiences the respect and applause of his friends and neighbours."

"Why it certainly is very pleasant," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy; "and particularly so when a man has the consolation of knowing that he has never done anything to forfeit the esteem of the world."

"I'm afraid I cannot boast of that being my case."

"Indeed! and how so, may I ask?"

"Have you then forgotten the time when I was a vagabond on the face of the earth,—abhorred and despised?"

"I have not forgotten what you allude to," replied the old gentleman, "but I think it's pretty well time that you should think no more of the folly you were then guilty of. What can a man do more than change his system as soon as he is convinced of his being in error. You have done so, and it is evident from what has lately taken place that your fellow citizens think none the worse of you because you happened at one period of your life to be addicted to drinking."

"And so I might have continued till now but for taking your advice, after you had as often urged me to take the pledge. My wife, too, deserves no little credit in the matter, for it was through her solicitations that I at length yielded, and from that moment every thing has prospered with us. From abject poverty I have mounted to my present position, I have friends in abundance, and my house is the dwelling of joy and peace."

"May it long continue so," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, "and may our children be partakers of the same blessings which we have ourselves enjoyed. In truth,

Marlow, you and I have much to be grateful for, and there is the further consolation of knowing that our success in life has been owing to the strict honour and integrity with which our business has always been conducted. Had we swerved from that part, neither you nor I should have been situated as we now happily are."

"And there is a yet further satisfaction in knowing that my example may prove useful to those who are to come after me," exclaimed Marlow. "My life affords a proof that in no circumstances, however desperate they may appear, ought a man to despair, but rather pursue such a course as he knows to be honourable in preference to one that will bring him into discredit. From the moment that I gave up my old habits of intemperance, I obtained the favour of those whose esteem is best worth having. Nor is that all, for I have had the consolation within a very brief period, of bringing an unfortunate workman of mine to a sense of the folly he was guilty of when he was wasting his means as well as his health amongst a set of worthless vagabonds who were lost to all sense of honour."

"Do I know the man you are speaking of?"

"Oh yes, he was one that you discharged about the same time that you did me."

"Pray what is the man's name?"

"Thompson."

"Oh! I remember the person very well; he was one of the very worst in my employ, and I should almost have fancied that he had killed himself with drinking long ago."

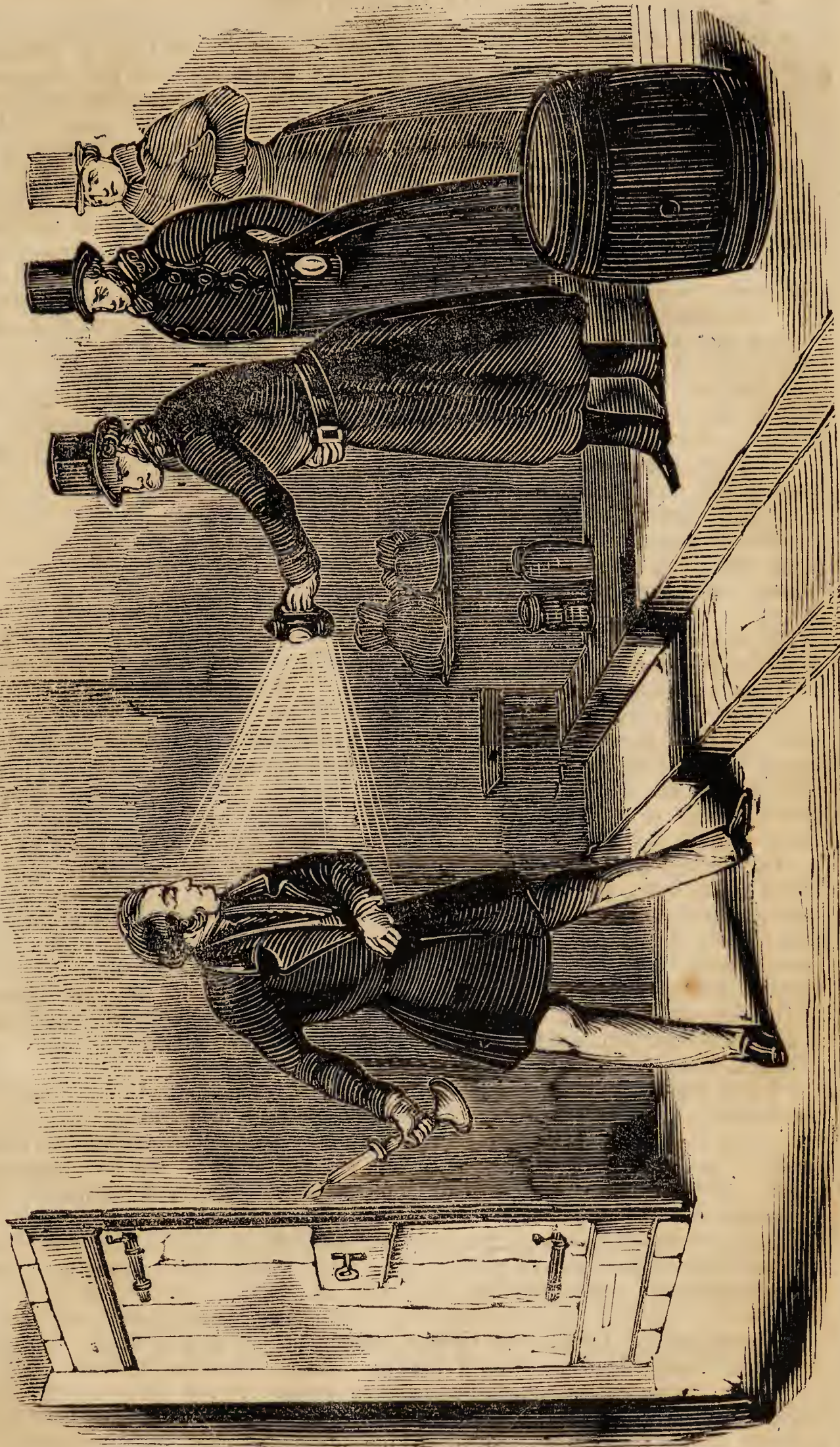
"And so he very nearly did, some time since," answered Marlow, "and was even reduced to so low a state of poverty as to be obliged to accept an asylum in the parish workhouse. After a time, however, I had him removed to more comfortable lodgings, where, with purer air, and good medical attendance, he at length recovered sufficiently to work for his living, and I then gave him employment in my warehouse."

"Was he quite cured of his vile habit?" asked Mr. Bellamy.

"For a time he went on very well," answered the other, "but I fancy some of his old associates got hold of him,



# THE PLEDGE A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





for he began to grow less attentive to his business, and I had several times to reproach him with his ingratitude towards me who had endeavoured to serve him. This, however, had very little effect, and at length I was compelled to threaten him with an immediate dismissal from my service unless he gave speedy proofs of amendment. That seemed to bring him to his senses, for he has ever since been most punctual in his attendance, and only a short time before you came in he informed me that he has at length taken the pledge."

"You are not afraid then of his again falling into the hands of the men who formerly led him astray?"

"I think reliance may be placed in him now," answered Marlow, "for I have just heard that one of his old associates has returned to mend his ways, and that he is even anxious to obtain some sort of honest employment."

"Aye, but where is the master who would be foolish enough to take such a man into his house?"

"Why, the truth is," replied the other, "I have myself promised to set him to work immediately."

"Then I am afraid you will have reason enough to repent having placed any confidence in him."

"Of course I shall take care to look closely after him, and the moment I have reason to feel dissatisfied I shall send him about his business. Indeed I have desired Thompson to intimate as much to him, so that he is fully aware of the dangerous ground he stands on if he should return to any of his former dishonest tricks."

"I don't know how it is," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, "but I never could place any reliance in a man that was ever known to have been guilty of a dishonest action. However, I don't want to dishearten you in the very outset of this affair, so give the man a fair trial, taking care at the same time not to give him an opportunity of doing you any mischief."

"Depend upon it I shall look closely after him," replied Marlow, "for I am always apt to be suspicious of people who profess sorrow for their misdeeds so very suddenly. I may have acted foolishly in taking him into my employ,

but it was in the hope of rescuing a fellow creature from the temptation that poverty too often places before him, and therefore I shall scarcely blame myself, even if he should turn the veriest scamp that ever lived. At any rate he cannot plunder me to any very great extent if his actions are carefully watched, and before coming here he will have heard from Thompson that I always make it a practice to punish theft with the greatest severity, in order to deter others from yielding to a temptation to rob an employer."

Before Mr. Bellamy could make any reply to this he was interrupted by his son, who came with a message from Susan Marlow to her mother.

## CHAPTER XI.

A BURGLARY, AND THE CAPTURE OF ONE OF THE ROBBERS; SUSPICION FALLS UPON ANOTHER PERSON, WHICH, HOWEVER, PROVES TO BE WITHOUT FOUNDATION.

At an early hour one morning, about a week after the affair mentioned in the last chapter, Mr. Marlow was aroused from his sleep by a loud ringing at the door-bell. With as much speed as possible he slipped on his clothes, and proceeded down stairs to the warehouse, where to his surprise he found three or four policemen searching about the place with the assistance of their lanterns. Upon seeing him, the sergeant desired his men to proceed with their task, and then approaching Marlow, he said:

"I dare say you are surprised to see us here, sir, but the truth is, one of our people found your warehouse room door open just now, and springing his rattle to call us together, we find that your premises have been entered by three or four burglars."

"How do you know there were three or four of them?" demanded Mr. Marlow.

"Because a less number very seldom attempt a job of this kind," answered the man; "two were seen making their escape at the back of the premises, and my people are now looking about to see if any have remained behind."



"Has any of my property been taken away?"

"I rather think we disturbed them a little too soon for that," answered the sergeant; "there was an empty cart standing at the end of the street, but on a signal being given it was driven off rapidly, and the driver managed to escape."

"Then none of them have been taken into custody."

"At present they are at liberty," answered the other, "but I am much mistaken if some of them are not in the hands of our people before long."

"In such case you must have some clue to them?"

"Nothing more than this, sir," replied the policeman; "the door was evidently not forced open, but entrance was obtained by means of a false key, and I very strongly suspect that one, if not more of the persons in your employ have been concerned in this intended robbery."

"Some of my people," exclaimed Mr. Marlow.

"I think it will turn out so upon inquiry," answered the other, "and perhaps you may be able to guess who the persons, are if there are any in your employ whose character is not over-good."

"I believe them all to be honest," replied Mr. Marlow, after a brief pause.

"Have none entered your service very lately?"

"Yes; I took on a man about a week ago?"

"What sort of character had you with him?" inquired the police sergeant.

"None whatever," he replied; "for the man was strongly recommended to me, and I gave him a situation because I understood that he was starving in consequence of his determination to avoid some faults that he had been previously guilty of."

"Depend upon it, that's the man who has planned this robbery," exclaimed the other; "of course, sir, you took care to learn his name, and where he was to be found if ever he should happen to be wanted."

"His name I know is Thomas Daly."

"Whereabouts does he live when he is at home?"

"That I know nothing about, but I believe there is a person in my employ who can give us that information."

"What is the name of the man you speak of?"

"Joseph Thompson."

"How does his character stand for honesty?"

"I have never had any fault to find with him in that respect," answered Mr. Marlow; "he was once to be sure, very much in the habit of drinking to excess, but having succeeded in breaking himself of that, I have lately, as a reward for his good conduct removed him from this department of my business into the counting-house."

"And this person you say, sir, knows something of the man you called Thomas Daly?"

"I believe they were formerly friends," answered Mr. Marlow; "and it was through the intercession of Thompson that I at length was prevailed on to take the other into my warehouse."

"True, I have a strong notion that both of them were at the bottom of this joke to-night."

"Impossible!" I can answer for it that Thompson would never be guilty of such an act."

"Well, we shall see how that is before long, sir," exclaimed the sergeant; "but for my own part, I feel pretty certain matters will turn out as I have said. Everything goes to prove that the door must have been opened by people that knew the lock well, and no one could have fitted a key so exactly unless he had opportunities of taking an impression of the wards. So perhaps if you give this Thompson into custody he will tell where the other fellow is to be found."

"He'll tell me that without being taken into custody."

"You know him better than I do," returned the policeman, "but if he has any guilty knowledge of the affair he'll not say anything to criminate himself, unless he is frightened into it. And even if he should happen to be innocent, a few hours in our station-house would not do him any harm."

"Not do him any harm!" exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "is it nothing then for a man to be taken into custody on suspi-



cion of having been concerned in robbing his employer?"

"Its bad in some cases," answered the other, "but if we are not able to substantiate the charge, he will be set at liberty again, and his character remain uninjured. Excuse me, sir, for making the observation, but if you feel convinced of his honesty you would not suffer him to lose a situation in your own service."

"Most assuredly I would not discharge him under such circumstances," replied Mr. Marlow, "but that is not the only thing to be thought of, for the world is, generally speaking, very prejudiced, and when once a man has been accused of crime there is nothing more difficult to remove than the impressions that have been formed against him. Besides, whatever reasons you may have for suspecting him, I for my own part believe that he has no more to do with this projected robbery than you or I have."

"Do you think the other one is equally innocent?"

"Why, I'll not go so far as to say that," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, "but I must have had a pretty favourable opinion of him, or he would never have been permitted to enter my service."

"I think I know something of this Daly," observed the serjeant, "and if it is the man I mean, he is a fellow that we have long suspected to be a thief, though he has always managed to keep out of our clutches. At any rate he is well known to keep company with thieves, and people don't do that, you know, sir, unless they follow the same sort of business."

"But, my good fellow, you are not sure that the man Daly, who is in my employ is the same person that you are speaking of. The name is common enough, and this one may be a very honest fellow for aught we know."

"We shall see, sir, how that will be by and bye."

"And till we are certain of his guilt let us at least judge charitably of him," exclaimed Mr. Marlow. "I have no desire to shield crime, but at the same time it is my duty not to injure the character of an innocent man by entertaining suspicions that, if known to the world, would prove his entire destruc-

tion. To-morrow morning, however, as soon as Thompson comes to his work I will question him closely about the man he introduced into my service, and then I shall be able to judge whether there is any foundation for supposing that Thomas Daly has had anything to do with planning or arranging this intended robbery."

By this time the policemen who had been engaged searching over the place, approached, and one of them informed his serjeant that after a careful and strict examination of the premises, they could discover no traces of the men who had broken into the warehouse.

"Aye, aye," answered the serjeant, "I had very little doubt that they had made sure of their escape for a time, but they'll be lucky fellows if some of them are not in custody before three months are over their heads."

"At any rate," exclaimed the merchant, "I desire that Joseph Thompson may not be taken till I have had an opportunity of questioning him upon this subject."

"Very well, sir, your orders shall be obeyed," returned the officer; "but I suppose you will not be angry with us if we make sure of Thomas Daly."

"Do you happen to know where to meet with him?"

I rather think sir it will not give us much trouble to do that," answered the serjeant, "for we know two or three bad characters of the name of Daly; and as we shall pay a visit to them all in turn, there's no doubt we shall very soon light upon the one we want."

"And what would you do with him?" asked Mr. Marlow.

"Bring him here, in the first place," replied the other, "and if he is confronted with some of his fellow workmen, I dare say something will happen to bring out the truth. So now sir, we'll just fasten up your warehouse door and then, if you will let us out by some other way, we'll go and report this affair to our inspector, and then make the necessary inquiries for bringing the scoundrels to justice."

The place was soon secured with all possible care, though it could not for a moment be supposed that a second attempt would that night be made upon the premises, and, having satisfied them-



selves in this respect, the policeman went away to perform the other duties that belonged to him. Mr. Marlow then went up stairs to relieve the fears of his wife, who was waiting in great anxiety to know what could have been the occasion of such a violent ringing of the bell. Having informed her of what had taken place he again went below stairs to satisfy himself that no one was secreted on the premises, and was still occupied in that task when some of his men arrived to commence the usual labours of the day. To these he said not a word of what had transpired, but proceeded to the counting house where he busined himself till breakfast time, then he entered into a few more particulars with Mrs. Marlow than he thought it prudent to do on the former occasion. The first meal of the day over he went once more to the counting-house where he found Thompson busily engaged, and to whom he related the occurrence of the night though without giving utterance to a word that might lead him to suppose that the least suspicion had been directed towards himself. They were still engaged in talking over this affair when the serjeant came in with Tom Daly whom he held tightly by the arm.

"How is this?" exclaimed Mr. Marlow with surprise, "what is the reason that I see one of my people in your custody Mr. Sergeant?"

"He can tell you how it is if he likes," answered the policeman, "but he chooses to keep a quiet tongue, as if that would be of any use when the matter comes to be inquired into before the magistrate. They'll soon bring the truth to light, I'll be bound, and every person concerned in breaking into your warehouse may expect to be sent abroad for life unless they can tell a good tale to gammon the big wigs."

"Have you any grounds for suspecting that this man was concerned in the burglary?"

"There can't be much doubt of his being one of them," answered the policeman, "and I rather think by this time some of my mates will have found out where the rest of the fellows are hiding themselves."

"Daly," exclaimed his master, looking him full in the face, "you have heard what this man accuses you of, and are

probably aware that we have no real foundation upon which to substantiate a charge. On the other hand a strict inquiry into all the circumstances will be made, so that however dark and obscure the affair may be at present it cannot remain so for any long time. If therefore you are guilty confess it at once and I will take care that the punishment shall be as light as the law will permit.

"I beg your pardon sir," exclaimed the serjeant, "but you must not make any promise to the prisoner."

"But I have already done so my good fellow, and as he knows my intention he will now declare whether he is guilty or innocent of the crime laid to his charge. As I have lost nothing I have no wish to inflict any very severe punishment but would rather endeavour by pursuing a mild course to withdraw him from the companionship of evil men."

"You seem to have made up your mind to it, that I had a hand in the attempt that was last night made upon your warehouse," exclaimed Daly, addressing himself to his master.

"I have not yet ventured to form an opinion upon a subject where there are so many difficulties in the way," answered Mr. Marlow. "At present, however, the police seem to think there is good ground for suspecting that you must have had a hand in the affair, and, whether right or wrong it is not for me to say, but you have been taken up on the charge, and I suppose will not regain your liberty until the matter has been sifted to the very bottom."

"And why should I be suspected more than any body else in your employ?" he asked.

"Because, unfortunately, your character seems to have been known to the police before you entered my service, and when I was asked who was in my employ, and your name was mentioned, suspicion immediately fell upon you."

"And a man is to be accused of this crime because his character has been suspected before?"

"Come, come, old fellow," exclaimed the serjeant, "it's no use denying it now that you have got into our hands. We shall find everything out in spite of your standing to it that you are as innocent as a lamb, and what's more, it



won't be long before we have your comrades in custody."

"Comrades!" exclaimed Tom Daly with surprise.

"Aye; do you mean to say this job was to be attempted single handed?" asked the policeman.

"How many do you suspect were in it then?"

"Three or four at least, for we saw two of 'em escaping over the wall at the back of the premises, and the others I suppose made their way out of the door whilst we were after their comrades."

"Is there any body that you suspect in particular of being concerned in this robbery?" demanded the Daly.

"Oh yes, I've got my eye upon one of 'em," answered the policeman, glancing as he spoke towards the place where Thompson was sitting.

"Then why hasn't he been taken up on the charge as well as me?" demanded the other.

"Because Mr. Marlow has a notion that I am wrong in my suspicion," answered the sergeant, "I however, am pretty certain that I am right enough, and shall continue to make inquiries about him till I have succeeded in bringing the matter home to him."

"Who is the person you mean?" asked Daly anxiously.

"May I tell him sir?" asked the sergeant, addressing himself to Mr. Marlow.

"I had rather it could have been avoided," returned the merchant; "but as I am certain the person who has been alluded to will come out of this affair honourably to himself, I will no longer object to your mentioning his name."

"Well," exclaimed the sergeant, "then the person I suspect is no other than Joseph Thompson, the man who is now sitting at yonder desk."

"Great Heaven! what is the meaning of all this?" cried the person whose name had been mentioned in so unexpected a manner. "Who dares accuse me," he continued, "of a crime that I am perfectly innocent of?"

"I knew it would be so," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, extending his hand to the clerk; "I was sure of your innocence, my good fellow and nothing should have

induced me to consent to this explanation, but that I knew it would be better to relieve you from suspicion at once than suffer you to endure the odium without being conscious of the evil surmises of some persons who knew not your honesty as well as I do."

"You do not believe then that I have been guilty of so much base ingratitude."

"As heaven is my witness I do not," answered Mr. Marlow. "From the very first moment when the surmise was mentioned I resisted it by every argument in my power, and now your own positive denial assures me that my confidence in your honesty and integrity have not been bestowed in vain."

"You are right then," exclaimed Daly, unable any longer to conceal the truth; "for Joe Thompson had no more to do with breaking into your warehouse than you had yourself. He never knew that such an attempt was to be made, for if he had, the matter would have been at once exposed to the world."

"Then you declare that Joseph Thompson is innocent of this crime?" said the policeman.

"Aye, and am ready to take my oath of it."

"Then, without intending to do so, my fine fellow, you have admitted that you yourself were concerned in this intended robbery upon your master," exclaimed the sergeant, chuckling at his own personal ingenuity.

"What I said," answered Daly, "was not uttered quite so unguardedly as you may fancy. The truth is I saw an innocent man likely to get into a scrape, and determined to help him out of it, though by giving utterance to something that I knew would confirm the charge that has been made against myself."

"Are we to understand," asked Mr. Marlow, "that you admit having made the attempt to enter my warehouse for the purpose of committing a robbery?"

"I do admit it, sir," answered the other.

"Was any other person in it with you?"

"Yes, there was one person in it beside myself."

"Then tell us who he was," exclaimed the policeman.

"No, no, you'll never get that out of



me I promise you," exclaimed Tom Daly.

"How then are we to believe that you have spoken the truth in declaring that Joseph Thompson is innocent?"

"Its a very difficult affair to take the blame from an innocent man, or to accuse one that has taken as much trouble as I have myself," returned Daly. "Here am I safe in your clutches, and as there seems to be no chance of getting out of 'em, why I shall wait for my trial, and take whatever piece of good luck may happen to turn up. Mr. Marlow has, however, promised to get me as light a punishment as possible, so I shall depend upon him, and perhaps after all, the magistrate will only commit me for three or four months as a rogue and vagabond."

"You fancy you're going to get off very easily then?"

"I shall trouble my head very little about it," answered Daly, "for when once a man gets into a dilemma it's as well to be resigned to your fate at once. In this case, however, nothing was stolen from the premises, and as the governor here has promised to speak a good word for me, I suppose they wont want to lay it very heavy on me. A little imprisonment I can put up with patiently enough, for after all I shall have the consolation of knowing that I have been the means of saving an innocent man from punishment, whilst at the same time I have refused to peach against another that has been lucky enough to escape."

"So far he has kept out of our reach," exclaimed the policeman, "but its likely we shall have him fast enough before long, and then you must take care that he don't turn round and give information that will send you across the water for the rest of your days."

"Don't you think you are going to make me believe that," said Tom Daly, "for chaps that belong to our craft very rarely split against each other, and even when they do such a thing, there must be some very particular reason for it. Now there has never been a quarrel between my comrade and myself, so that neither the one nor the other will ever say a word that would get an old friend into a scrape."

"But we may soon find out who the

man was that came here with you last night."

"If you do, it will be something wonderful," exclaimed the other, "for he must be a fool if he has not taken himself far enough off from this place as soon as he discovered that I had fallen into your hands. Fellows that belong to my line of life are not so likely to give a chance away, as you seem to imagine."

"I would ask one question which you are at liberty to answer or not, as you may think proper," said Mr. Marlow. "You were very anxious to get employment in my house, and I would know whether it was for the express purpose of committing a robbery?"

"To tell you the truth, sir, it was," answered the other. "I fancied nothing could be easier, if I could once get employment here, and for that purpose it was that I asked Thompson to try what he could do for me. He little suspected what notions I had in my head, and in a short time afterwards I heard from him that I was to succeed him in the counting-house of his employer. So now you have heard the whole truth of me, let what may happen through it, and all I want to say is, that Joseph Thompson had nothing to do with the intended robbery. All was planned by myself and another comrade, who has been lucky enough to escape. I however, have fallen into your hands, and whatever punishment I may be sentenced to, will be richly deserved, because I ought to have made my escape while there was an opportunity."

The sergeant having heard him thus far, requested Mr. Marlow to follow them to the Police Court without delay.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

Tom Daly was no sooner taken on suspicion of being concerned in the burglary upon the premises of his employer, than, finding that the evidence against him was conclusive, he confessed the crime, but resolutely refused to say a word to denounce those who had assisted him. The next morning he was conveyed before a magistrate for examination, when he made the same admission,



and learning from what passed that some suspicion had been entertained against Thompson he declared most solemnly that he had not participated in the slightest degree in the intended robbery.

"They've nabbed me, your worship," he said, "and as it's plain enough to be seen that the game's all up, I've confessed my own guilt, and it's only fair that I should help an innocent man out of the scrape. Joe Thompson was'n't consulted about the affair at all, for I had a notion that he was'n't to be trusted with the secret, and it would be hard for him to suffer for it, when he would most likely have been the first one to inform Mr. Marlow of what was going on."

"I think," said the magistrate, addressing himself to the policeman who had made the charge, "you said there were more persons than one on the premises when you made the discovery that they had been broken into."

"I'm almost certain, your worship, there were two, if not three others," answered the man.

"There were two others," exclaimed Daly; "but I hope they'll not be taken quite so easily as I was. Who they were I don't mean to tell anybody, but I dare say the time is not far off when they'll be found out at some other job of this kind. For my own part I acknowledge that I deserve whatever may happen, and now, when it's too late I see the mischief that follows those who give way to drinking to the excess that I have done."

"You should have thought of this before," observed the magistrate.

"And so I did think of it," replied the other, "but drinking is one of the habits that a man like me can't get rid of. I used to laugh at people when they preached temperance to me, and refused to take the pledge though I saw the good it did to all those that had fore-sworn strong drinks. But what's done can't be helped now, and all I hope is that the warning won't be thrown away upon those that may read what I am now saying."

"And I hope," observed the magistrate, "that they will also bear in mind the fearful condition to which you have reduced yourself. The punishment that awaits you is dreadful to contemplate.

You will most likely be for ever deprived of your liberty; the ties of family and friendship are completely severed, and in a foreign land, far away from your own country, you will pass the rest of your miserable existence in hopeless slavery. Such is the punishment of crime, which, in too many instances, is produced by a too free indulgence in drink."

"That's very true, sir," answered the prisoner, "there's no occasion to tell me what to expect; but I hope my word will be taken for it that Thompson had nothing to do with this business."

"His master has made no charge against him," replied the magistrate, "and I therefore suppose he is satisfied that he is innocent. I trust however, that this warning will not be thrown away upon him, for it has been hinted to me that he, like yourself has been a drunkard, and surely this lesson will not be easily forgotten when he sees the dreadful state of suffering to which you have been reduced."

"Your worship," exclaimed Thompson, who was in the court, "I have already seen my error, and am resolved to make amends for my past life, by pursuing a better and a steadier course."

"This man," answered the magistrate, "has completely exonerated you by admitting that he was afraid of mentioning the intended robbery, under an impression that you would have immediately communicated the secret to your master. I am glad to hear it, for when once men have resolved upon plunder, it is but too likely that murder will follow in the event of discovery taking place, while they are engaged in their nefarious practices."

"It would have been so in the present case," exclaimed Daly, "for I was armed with a brace of loaded pistols, and had Mr. Marlow or any of his people discovered me, I should have shot them without hesitation, rather than run the risk of being given up to justice. So, bad as my case is, I have at any rate the consolation of knowing that I haven't the blood of a fellow-creature to answer for."

"But you seem to be repentant for the past," observed the magistrate, "and I hope when this affair comes to be made public it will act



THE PLEDGE; A SEQUEL TO THE BOTTLE.





as a salutary warning to those who are addicted to the same vicious courses as you have been."

"And if I conduct myself well," asked Daly, "I suppose there'll be a chance of my punishment being lessened?"

"I can hold out no hope of that kind," answered the other, "for whatever doom you are sentenced to by the judge who tries you, will be as a punishment for your past evil deeds. There is, however, a power given to those to whose care you will be consigned, and if your penitence seems to be really sincere, you may, after some length of time, obtain some slight remittance of your sentence. But never, under any circumstances, will you be permitted to return to your native land. However, I am glad to find that you are no longer the hardened villain you were, and in the solitude of your prison, I trust you will ask pardon for the many crimes you have been guilty of against the laws of Heaven, as well as man."

"Well," he replied, "I think if ever I was to be at liberty again, I should lead a different sort of life to what I have been used to. I don't see things as I did, so if Mr. Marlow will recommend me to mercy, perhaps I may not be sent abroad for the rest of my days."

"It's not for me to say how the judge will act under such circumstances," answered his worship; "but you must remember your crime is one of the greatest magnitude, and therefore requires the heaviest punishment, in order to deter others from pursuing a similar course. The prosecutor will to-morrow, follow his own notions upon the subject, and if he should do so, and your penitence appears to be sincere, it may probably weigh favourably when the sentence of the law is pronounced upon you. Yet no expectations ought to be indulged in, for the offence is a very heinous one, and must be punished with extreme severity. I will now hear what the witnesses have to say, and when their depositions have been made, I shall commit you forthwith for trial, at the next sessions."

The various witnesses were then examined, and as their evidence, coupled with the confession, left no doubt of the prisoner's guilt, he was sent to New-

gate to await his trial. In the following week he was arraigned for the burglary, and on being called upon, pleaded guilty. Mr. Marlow then stepped forward, and earnestly recommended him to mercy; but the judge could see no extenuating circumstances in the case, and in a feeling address to the prisoner, sentenced him to be transported beyond the seas for the term of his natural life. Daly was then removed from the bar, and in less than a month afterwards was, with between two and three hundred convicts, on his voyage to that far distant land in which he was doomed to wear out the remainder of his miserable existence, in hopeless slavery and exile. Such, reader, was the fate of a man, who but for his intemperance might have been an honour and an example to his fellow beings!

"I don't know how it is," said Mr. Marlow to his wife, on hearing that the convict had taken his final departure, "but the fate of poor Tom Daly grieves me very much. It is true he was a worthless, abandoned scoundrel, but at the last he showed such unequivocal signs of sorrow for the past, that I really think if the opportunity had been afforded him he would have led a very different sort of life."

"There is no chance then, you think, of his ever being permitted to return to England?" said Mrs. Marlow.

"I am quite certain he never will," answered her husband; "nor do I suppose he will wish to do so, when once he gets used to the country he is going to. He will there form new, and it is to be hoped better acquaintances, and will hardly wish to return to his native land, where his crimes would render him an outcast from society."

"And what do you think of Thompson?" asked Mrs. Marlow; "is he still going on to your satisfaction?"

"I have now every reason to be pleased with him," replied Marlow; "and judging by his conduct of late, there is no doubt that his reformation is permanent. He is now rigidly adhering to the pledge, and it is no little gratification to see that there is not a more steady or sober man in my employment than Joseph Thompson."

"But," observed his wife, "he has relapsed two or three times."



"So he has," replied Mr. Marlow, "but now, he at length, sees the folly he has been guilty of, and I have good reason to believe, that he is beyond the power of temptation. Indeed, so great is my confidence in him, that if he goes on a little longer as he has been doing of late, I shall give him a small share in my business, as a token of approbation."

"Have you told him of your intention?" she asked.

"At present he knows nothing about it," answered her husband, "for I want his reformation to be caused by his own sense of duty, and not by the temptation of a reward. Already I feel quite certain that he is deserving of all my confidence, and if matters go on as they do now, I shall take him in as a partner, on the day that witnesses the marriage of our children."

"Which will be within a fortnight," observed Mrs. Edwards. "Ah, well, well, who would have thought a few years ago, that I should see such happiness in your family, as that with which you are now blessed."

"Nor would you have seen it, my good old friend," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, taking her hand, "but for my determination to break myself of a habit that had brought myself and my family to ruin. Had I continued a drunkard, all the blessings I now enjoy would have been denied me."

"And I too," answered the old lady, "should have been deprived of the happiness which you have so kindly afforded me."

"Don't talk of my kindness," answered Mr. Marlow, "for how can I do enough to recompence you for an act that I never can forget. We have now an abundance of the world's best blessings, but you, as well as myself, must recollect one morning, when but for your interference, my wife and children must have been without food."

"Aye," answered the old lady, "but I would rather not think of those days of sorrow and misery. Besides, if I happened on one occasion to do you a little kindness, recollect how kindly you have since repaid me for it. From that hour, I have shared your home, and been treated as a mother, rather than as a poor stranger."

"And think you there could have been a greater happiness than I have experienced through having you amongst us?" demanded Mr. Marlow. "Gratitude is one of the first duties of life, and base indeed should I have been had I neglected the generous friend who came forward in the hour of need, when it seemed that all the world had forsaken me."

"Besides," observed Mrs. Marlow, "the acquaintance has been a most fortunate one for all of us, so the obligation of which our friend speaks is cancelled. I have always found in her a kind companion, and my constant gratitude is due for the lucky chance that led to our acquaintance. And our children; too, have derived no little advantage from one whom they have learned to regard as a relative."

"I see how it is," laughed the good old lady; "you are not satisfied with having done so much for me, but must needs make it appear that you are the persons who have derived the most advantage from the connexion that chance brought about. However, I will not deprive you of a pleasure that seems to afford you so much satisfaction, so have it your own way, my dear friends, and be assured that I am grateful for all the kindness you have so generously heaped upon me."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Marlow, rising from his seat, "since you delight in dwelling so much on our praise, I shall leave you to settle this matter with my wife; who by-the-by would rather not hear anything more upon this subject. Continue with us, my dear madam, and share with us our good fortune, as you have done for the last few years."

Saying this, he took his departure, leaving the two ladies to talk over the affair by themselves.

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We have thus seen the happy family of Mr. Marlow rise from the lowest depths of poverty to an exalted station in life, though his own merits and the rectitude of his conduct. On the day which had been named, his daughter gave her hand to young Mr. Bellamy, and at the same time, and before the same altar, Frank Marlow was married to the heiress of one of the richest



merchants in the City of London. Of course, on an occasion of this kind the greatest happiness was infused into the hearts of all those who were most nearly and dearly concerned. Shortly after returning home from church, the two bridegrooms and their brides left town to pass the honeymoon with their respective friends in the country; and Mr. and Mrs. Marlow were thus left to indulge their own happy anticipations of the joyous career that there could be no doubt awaited their children. And good Mrs. Edwards, too,—the friend who had been so kind to them when most they stood in need of her services—was not one of the least happy on this felicitous occasion. She had long foreseen the success which would reward the honourable exertions of her friends, nor did she forget to remind them at this period, of the prediction of the

gipsy woman, who in Richmond Park had foretold the happy destiny that awaited them. It was in vain that they laughed at her credulity, for the old lady was not without her share of superstition, and most firmly did she believe the Bohemian oracle must have been deeply read in the dark pages of human destiny.

Six years afterwards Mr.— or rather let us call him Alderman Marlow, was unanimously chosen by his brother citizens, to the highest honour it was in their power to bestow. He became Lord Mayor of London, and as it happened during his year of office that a profitable situation became vacant, he exerted himself in favour of Joseph Thompson, and obtained it for him as a mark of his favour and esteem, for the steady conduct he had pursued during the latter few years of his life.



THE END.

























